Robotech:

Arrival of the Siege Machines

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Titlecard: Reykjavik, Iceland

EXT. WHARF IN REYKJAVIK - MORNING

A FISHERMAN of sixty with sun-bronzed skin, ragged corduroy pants and a thick parka, sits in a boat tied to a fishing wharf; behind him is the pristine white Icelandic capital, Reykjavik.

The Fisherman looks into a large bucket filled with water and heterogenous fish; a codfish snaps at its somnolent neighbor.

FISHERMAN
Oh!

The Fisherman plunges his blunt and callused hand into the bucket- SPLOOSH- grabs and then withdraws the squirming codfish. He eyes the specimen hotly.

FISHERMAN (CONT'D)
Haga sér, fiskabollur.

The Fisherman runs his thick index finger along the dorsal fin of the codfish; the fish continues to squirm...flapping, flopping, struggling.

FISHERMAN (CONT'D)
Haga sér.

The Fisherman looks the codfish in the eyes

FISHERMAN (CONT'D)
(thick accent)
Fishball! Behave.

He strokes the fish gently on its fin; the creature calms itself. The fisherman smiles.

FISHERMAN (CONT'D)
You speak American, I see.
(he shakes his head)
They even got to the fish.

The Fisherman pats the fish on the head.

FISHERMAN (CONT'D)
Don’t bite the others.

The Fisherman sees something flash in the fish’s eyes. He squints, leans forward and stares at the creature. Reflected in the codfish’s pupils is the glowing white sky...across which speeds an oval-shaped landscape of spikes.

The Fisherman looks up.

A smoking, speeding CITYSHIP fills the sky from horizon to horizon, and elephantine space-craft made of white and gray metal. The top is covered with towers, cylinders and hemispherical domes, all of which are littered with windows and (closed) hatchways. The hull of the craft is a mass of jutting spikes. The ROAR of its perilous descent smothers all sounds in Iceland.

The Fisherman throws the codfish toward the ocean, a last gesture of goodwill. The moment before the fish strikes the surface of the water, the Cityship impacts Iceland.

The EXPLOSION obliterates the land mass.

Titlecard: The Himalayas

EXT. HIMALAYAS - SAME

The serrated mountain ranges, a sweep of brown, gray, rust and white stone, thrust like a challenge to the sky. For a brief moment, the clouds above the peaks darken: a oval-shaped shadow darkens the tufted mass.

A heartbeat later, the cotton disperses; a Cityship impales itself upon the spiny ridges of stone. Mountain peaks thrust through the craft like tips of upthrust pencils, Earth's answer to the spikes covering the hull of the craft.

The Cityship EXPLODES, a welter of metal and sparks and loosened stone spinning pell-mell.

Titlecard: Atlantic Ocean, near North Carolina

EXT. ATLANTIC OCEAN - NIGHT

The moonlit ocean is a stretched tarp of aqua-blue steel; the final Cityship- sparking and trailing white fire- plummets toward the earth.

The six crescent-shaped lift-jets on the underside of the plummeting craft fire, BWOOSH, slowing the speed of the craft's descent. The lift-jets fire a second time, BWOOSH; the Cityship, ten miles from the ocean surface, slows again...yet still descends perilously. The lift-jets fire again, but SPARK and FIZZLE, a small internal EXPLOSION jars the vessel.

The thrusters cut out in unison: the vessel plummets the remaining three miles, raining molten detritus.

The Cityship impacts the water with a terrific CRACK.

INT. NEO-SPEEDSTER CAR - NIGHT

HUNTER BILLINGHAM, a lean fourteen year-old young man with messy hair, alert eyes and an inscrutable grin, steers his car quickly along the winding country road. Beside him sits MAY LEUNG, an American-born thirteen year-old young woman of Chinese descent.

A thunderous BOOM followed by a brilliant white light envelops the environs. Trees silhouetted by the glare are reflected in Hunter's alert eyes, like spiderweb cracks upon his irises.

MAY
Oh my god! Are we being attacked?

The luminance fades; more EXPLOSIONS sound; Hunter looks up: green and pink light arcs into the sky.

MAY (CONT'D)
The President said that China-

HUNTER
Something crashed: maybe a plane or-

A series of lights lance into the sky above the vehicle.

HUNTER (CONT'D)
Put on your seat-belt.

MAY
No. I'd rather get thrown clear if-

His left hand still gripping the wheel, Hunter reaches over, grabs the belt buckle and yanks it across May's chest (ZZSHH), CLICKING it home beside her waist, fastening her in. Hunter keeps his eyes on the sky; the lights grow brighter.

MAY (CONT'D)
I'm not a child.

HUNTER
That's debatable.

A twelve-ton, fifty-foot block of white steel SLAMS into the road ahead of Hunter. He cuts the wheel sharply to the left and veers with a SCREECH around the smoldering mass.

EXT. WINDING MOUNTAIN ROAD - SAME

The blue car returns to the road. The front windshield is clear and reflects only stars and the moon; the back windshield reflects seven hunks of airborne debris growing larger as they fall toward the earth, behind the vehicle.

INT. NEO-SPEEDSTER CAR - SAME

Hunter speeds his car forward; he glances at his rearview mirror: two glacial chunks impact the pavement with thunderous BOOMS.

MAY
What's happening?

HUNTER
Don't know.

Hunter shakes his head. May looks at her handcomputer.

MAY
Signal's disrupted.

Hunter points to his left: in the distance is a red glow pulsed by intermittent white and lavender fulgurations.

HUNTER
It went down over there.

MAY
Let's go back.

Another piece of debris impacts the pavement behind them, BOOM, rending the night with light and THUNDER.

HUNTER
No. Let's see if there's something we can do.

MAY
You don't even have a license! Just find another road to circle ba-

HUNTER
I'm not worried about a ticket right now. We should see if we can help whoever-

A black chunk of debris SLAMS into the pavement directly ahead of Hunter; his headlights shine upon the charred surface and back at him like two luminous eyes.

EXT. WINDING MOUNTAIN ROAD - SAME

The road BUCKLES beneath the weight of the fallen debris; the pavement beneath the neo-speedster rises like the lifted end of a sea-saw; within the vehicle, Hunter cuts the wheel sharply to his left. The vehicle begins to SKID.

INT. NEO-SPEEDSTER CAR - SAME

Hunter spins the steering wheel to the right, toward the smoldering debris blocking the road ahead. The wheels catch with a SQUEAK; Hunter regains control of the car and veers left, away from the metal obstruction, tires SCREECHING.

The moment he steers clear of the slab, *the bright headlight of an oncoming motorcycle shines into his windshield*. Pallid in the glaring light, Hunter's eyes widen in alarm; May's breath catches.

EXT. WINDING MOUNTAIN ROAD - SAME

The neo-speedster SKIDS right; the motorcyclist SKIDS left.

INT. NEO-SPEEDSTER CAR - SAME

The MOTORCYCLIST'S helmeted head SLAMS into the driver's window, CRACKING it.

Hunter glances into the rearview mirror and watches the motorcyclist carom from the road...and- free from gravity- spin like a doll into the gulf beyond the mountainside.

HUNTER
No.

The fulgurations brightly discolor the sky, as if taking a snapshot of the airborne motorcyclist's final moment before he disappears from view alongside his cartwheeling vehicle.

HUNTER (CONT'D)
No. No. No.

Hunter's face pales; he steps on the brakes and slows the vehicle. He glances at the darkness into which the motorcyclist has fallen.

MAY
It wasn't your fault.

Hunter glances at May; he is pale and frightened.

MAY (CONT'D)
There's nothing you could've done.

Hunter looks away from her and then rubs his sparkling eyes.

MAY (CONT'D)
I won't tell anyone.

HUNTER
Let's...let's...

Hunter, queasy, enervated and shaken, looks into black gulf beyond; he grips the wheel to steady his tremulous hands.

HUNTER (CONT'D)
Let's get out of here.

The fourteen year-old cuts the wheel and accelerates without looking back.

EXT. OUTER SPACE / THE ORBIT OF EARTH

An enormous crater cuts like a wound across the Himalayan Mountains; water covers over the area where Iceland once existed; the shoreline of North Carolina has been reshaped.

Eight flashes of light speed toward the moon...

EXT. ATLANTIC OCEAN / CRASH SITE - NOON

From a stationary, airborne squadron of MILITARY HELICOPTERS emerges a lone Task Force Helicopter; it sweeps across the ocean, buoyed by a trio of WHIRRING blades into the space above the landed Cityship.

INT. TASK FORCE HELICOPTER - SAME

Ten TASK FORCE MEMBERS, all wearing bright orange suits, sit in the belly of the helicopter. JOAN ESTERLY, a petite Englishwoman of thirty-seven years with short spiky hair, sits beside a tall German Man of thirty-four years named MATTIAS RHEINER.

MATTIAS RHEINER
Wish we had some weapons. Even a knife. Hell, even a stick with a nail in it.

JOAN
We don't want them to think we're a violent race.

MATTIAS RHEINER
I'd prefer to be honest with them.

EXT. THE CITYSHIP HULL / TOWER COMPLEX - MOMENTS LATER

The helicopter is parked on the blemished white steel of the spacecraft; the ten task force members have disembarked from the helicopter and currently stand in front of the dark portal: each member wears a contoured, foam-lined faceshield over his/her face and a talkbud in his/her right ear. The air filtration motors of each faceshield PURR quietly like contented cats.

At the front of the group is Joan; she looks at the point of ingress: a portal roughly seven feet tall. She shines a light into the darkened interior; the cone of luminance spills upon a collapsed door.

A thin ITALIAN MAN with spooked eyes and a large nose (the tip of which presses into his faceshield) trains a digital camera (which resembles a tube of lipstick) toward the opening.

ITALIAN MAN
(thick accent)
Note that the- ehhh- doorway is roughly *human* size.

KENJO, a Japanese man of forty-eight years with a silver beard, looks at Joan.

KENJO
Proceed, Miss Esterly.

Joan, mouthing a silent prayer that ends with the words, "don't let me die," walks into the darkness.

INT. CITYSHIP TOWER - SAME

Preceded by the cone of light her powerful handlamp casts, Joan walks into a hallway of corrugated white steel, her FOOTSTEPS, those of her companions and the dim PURR of their air purifiers are the only sounds extant.

Joan examines the hallway with her light; the walls have no features on them other than fifteen rows of thin black threads running across their length; nine silver threads run along the ceiling. The entire task force trails behind her, apprehensive but steady.

Perspiration slides down Joan's face; her mask fogs slightly. She twists a blue nozzle on the side of the faceshield: a small jet of coolant HISSES within her mask; the plexi-glass of her faceshield clears.

JOAN
(quietly)
Should we start?

KENJO
(quietly)
Hai.

Joan lightly CLEARS her throat, looks ahead into the darkness and calls out.

JOAN
Konichiwa.

The group continues up the gray, curvilinear hall, haunted by the echo of Joan's greeting.

JOAN (CONT'D)
Konichiwa.

The greeting resounds...but remains unanswered.

INT. HUB PASSAGEWAY - LATER

The ten task force members, sweaty and fatigued, enter a circular passageway that branches off into four other directions.

The nine subordinates look at Kenjo; the Japanese man scratches his beard as he eyes the four branching paths.

KENJO
We go in pairs. Hold to procedure: call out in a moderate volume so that we don't surprise anything.

ITALIAN MAN
Do we have to say it in Japanese?

KENJO
Yes.

INT. ARCED HALLWAY - LATER

Joan and the nervous Italian man, walking in tandem, traverse the long, curvilinear hall.

ITALIAN MAN
Konichiwa.

As the Italian man's Japanese greeting reverberates, the light of Joan's handlamp divines a dark mass in the tunnel up ahead. Joan's breath catches; the Italian man's eyes flare. They stop.

JOAN
I think it's a blockage-- a collapsed section.

They continue forward; the light reveals that this portion of the tunnel has indeed caved-in.

ITALIAN MAN
Something- ehhh- fell in and- ehhh- how you say- pounded it flat. We- ehhhh- we go back now?

Joan examines the twisted gray metal with her light; she points her handlamp to the bottom of the mass and shakes her head.

JOAN
There's enough space to crawl underneath.

Joan drops to her knees and, clutching her handlamp in her right hand, worms inside the aperture at the bottom of the blockage. The moment she disappears, the Italian man turns on his handlamp to push back the darkness.

INT. NARROW TUNNEL - SAME

Joan crawls beneath the mound of steel, hastily trying to press through the space. She accidentally SMACKS her flashlight against an unseen leaf of metal; the bulb CRACKS; the light goes dead.

JOAN
Shit, shit, shit.

Joan exhales to try and calm herself. Her eyes dilate and in a moment she descries a weak lavender light glowing in the distance. A lom HUM becomes audible, accompanied by a single almost musical PITCH. Joan grimaces.

DRIP. Joan looks at her facemask; a dot of crimson sits on the plexiglass and drips down like a tear. She touches her fingertip to the blood, but it does not smear. A second drop DRIPS onto the facemask...from her right nostril.

Another drop follows; the mask has three stripes of red running down it. She twists the talkbud in her ear.

JOAN (CONT'D)
I’m getting a nosebleed. A bad one. And a headache.
(she listens)
No. Let me just get to the end of-

Joan SMACKS her blood-smeared faceshield into a nearby flap of metal extruding from the top of the tunnel; startled, she jerks upright and SLAMS the back of her head into the tunnel ceiling. She passes out; the HUMMING grows slightly louder.

INT. LONG GRAY HALL - SAME

Mattias Rheiner and a SIBERIAN WOMAN point their handlamps up the gray passage. The woman steps upon an oval of metal; CLACK; immediately to her left, a metal panel the size of a door slides into the floor, FWISSS.

The German and the Siberian retreat from the opening and then turn to face it, their lights upraised. From within the dark enclosure are the susurrations of the ocean.

Mattias walks toward the portal and shines his flashlight inside; the Siberian woman follows behind; they stare into the space beyond, awestruck.

SIBERIAN WOMAN
What are those?

INT. ARCED HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

The Italian Man pulls Joan from the tunnel and, with gentle ministrations, rouses her. She stares at him, disoriented and utterly perplexed.

JOAN
What happened?

ITALIAN MAN
You...passed out. I- ehhhh- rescued you.

JOAN
Well thanks for the “rescue.” Let’s get out of here before I fill up this mask with puke.

The Italian Man takes Joan’s hands and helps her to her feet.

ITALIAN MAN
You can walk?

JOAN
For almost thirty-six years.

The Italian Man is unsure whether that was “English Humour.”

ITALIAN MAN
What- ehhhh- language was that you were speaking?

Joan’s eyes narrow.

JOAN
When I was unconscious? I was talking?

ITALIAN MAN
Si.

JOAN
What did it sound like? Spanish, French and English are all I know.

ITALIAN MAN
Not those. I am- ehhh- familiar with those. It was...uglier.

JOAN
Cantonese? Hebrew? I’ve seen movies in those languages, so maybe-

ITALIAN MAN
No. It was different-- more animal sounding. *Very* different.

Joan has no reply; the two walk up the hall in contemplative silence.

INT. HUB PASSAGEWAY - MOMENTS LATER

The task force members have reunited: they look at Kenjo; the Italian Man points his camera at the Japanese leader. Joan, tremulous and pallid, leans heavily on Mattias Rheiner.

KENJO
We'll have bacteriologists do a follow-up inspection, but at this point it seems safe to conclude that there are no life forms aboard the ship.

ITALIAN MAN
What- ehhh- what do you think?

Kenjo scratches his silver beard and frowns.

KENJO
We've been given weapons, ones tailored to our physiology. This "gift"- this technology- must be meant for us to use as defense.

ITALIAN MAN
Against what?

MATTIAS RHEINER
Perhaps whatever caused these ships to crash-- maybe *they're* the enemy. Seems they didn't want us to have these weapons, right?

JOAN
But where is this "enemy" now? And moreover, *what* are they?

Nobody responds to the Englishwoman's question.

Titlecard: The lone surviving ship was named the Siege Defense Fortress. The primary power source of the ship was destroyed, but the weapons of war it carried remained intact.

No threat from the stars had manifested, but in time humanity used the SDF's weapons against one another: the International Committee for the Allotment of Advanced Technologies- ICAAT- first sanctioned the use of these crafts in the Taiwan Incident and later in the two Calcutta Wars.

It is now 2034, fifteen years later...

EXT. OUTER SPACE / THE ORBIT OF THE EARTH

Variegated satellites orbit the Earth: pinwheels, oblongs, spheres and cannisters. A bright blue barbell-shaped satellite with a logo that reads "Superion Network Live-Def Broadcast" transcends the atmosphere; insectile antennae and small coils jut from its ends. Two of its jets erupt in smears of white light. The satellite, trailing smoke and detritus, spins out of orbit...toward the moon.

Titlecard: Superion Network Control Room; Seattle, Washington

INT. SUPERION NETWORK CONTROL BOOTH - SAME

The live-definition broadcast control room has blue shag carpeting, royal blue walls, gray-foam sofas, chairs and divans. EIGHT PEOPLE sit on the furnishings, focused on rectangular monitors, typing on customized light-sensitive keyboards whereupon the keys have been rearranged as per each person's taste.

ANDREW, a slovenly man of forty, is seated in a cup-shaped chair before a screen upon which shines the image of a young woman with no hair and no mouth. In the top corner of the screen are the words, 'Hostess Template: Sexy/Approachable'.

On his customized, light-sensitive keyboard (where the keys have been arranged in two rows of five: one has five letters the other changes the five letters presented), he types in a command; an instant later, long black hair adorns the bare head of the Hostess.

ANDREW
Let's bring out those cheekbones a-

The image of the silent black-haired woman is replaced by scrolling statistics; Andrew scans the data and types in a code.

The data is replaced by a spinning live-def image that pans past the moon, the Earth, a few satellites, the moon, the Earth, a few satellites...in dizzying repetition. Andrew punches in a few more commands; data pours down the right-hand side of his screen.

ANDREW (CONT'D)
Bressman.

BRESSMAN, thirty, sharply-dressed, seated in the back examining an ice cube, looks at Andrew.

ANDREW (CONT'D)
It's the new satellite-- second and fourth boosters just blew.

Bressman's calm face betrays a tiny flicker of concern; he drops the ice cube back into his sparkling beverage, PLOP.

BRESSMAN
Can we recall it?

ANDREW
It's unresponsive.

BRESSMAN
It's insured. Where's it headed?

ANDREW
The moon, more or less.

BRESSMAN
Good. Nobody'll sue us if it crashes there.

Andrew glances at the screen; the panning image continuously rotates the moon, the Earth and a few satellites.

Titlecard: Raleigh, North Carolina

INT. DILAPIDATED APARTMENT - NIGHT

The sunken couch, milk-crate furniture, heaps of garbage and pile of film-covered dishes in the sink are testaments of neglect. May Leung stands with her shoulder to a green door from which strips of paint hang like the tongues of dogs. She is now twenty-seven and has circles around her eyes and a drawn, worn face. A THUMP shakes the door against which she presses; her eyes flare in alarm.

MAY
Go away. There's nothing more to say. Hunter is going to be-

ANGRY MAN (O.S.)
I'm through waiting out here. You let me in right now or I'll break this thing down. Right now!

INT. TENEMENT BUILDING HALLWAY - SAME

The fifth-floor hallway is covered in ugly green paint; sodium lights like pustules glow weakly upon the ceiling. Hunter, twenty-nine, calm and unhappy, walks with fast measured steps up the hallway, his hands in his windbreaker pockets. OSCAR, a Latin man in his late thirties with a goatee and a barrel chest, SLAMS his palm against May's door.

HUNTER
Oscar.

The Latin man looks at Hunter; Hunter stands in the middle of the hall, fifteen feet away.

OSCAR
This isn't your business-- it's between me and her.

HUNTER
Go home, have a beer-- she doesn't want to see you.

OSCAR
Get deleted asshole. She's *my* girlfriend.

HUNTER
I don't know or really care, but right now, you're getting the hell out of here.

Oscar, enraged, turns to face Hunter. Hunter unzips his windbreaker and sets it on a radiator beside him. He points to the tattoo on his neck.

HUNTER (CONT'D)
You know how I got this, right?

Oscar, a little nervous, nods; he clenches his fists. Hunter approaches him, calmly but with a baleful gaze.

HUNTER (CONT'D)
You're sure you want to do this?

Oscar's eyes flicker to the tattoo on Hunter's neck and then to the twenty-nine year-old's unblinking eyes.

HUNTER (CONT'D)
Go home. Call her tomorrow.

Oscar walks past Hunter, SLAMMING his shoulder into the smaller man. Hunter grabs Oscar's wrist, twists his arm into the small of his back and SLAMS him face-first into the wall, pinning him forcefully.

A nearby door opens; an ELDERLY AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMAN steps outside.

ELDERLY WOMAN
What's wrong with you people? Can't you-

HUNTER
Go back inside Ma'am. This *gentleman* was just on his way out.

Hunter digs his thumb into the big man's right wrist joint, eliciting a few CRACKS. Oscar face reddens in pain.

The Elderly Woman retracts back into her apartment; Hunter wheels Oscar around and shoves him up the hall.

HUNTER (CONT'D)
Walk away. You even turn around and you're crawling out of here without your teeth.

Oscar, holding is dislocated wrist, walks up and out of the hall.

Hunter walks to May's apartment. The door opens up, revealing three chains and the worried visage of May Leung.

INT. DILAPIDATED APARTMENT - LATER

Hunter sits on the couch beside May; her face is pressed into his chest, she is SOBBING. He holds her, a deep sadness veils his tired face. Hunter looks at a table upon which is a plastic bag, a pill bottle and two syringes.

HUNTER
You need to stop seeing him. He's a bad influence...and smells lousy. What if I wasn't around to scare him off?

May nods, her tears staining Hunter's brown shirt.

MAY
I know, I know.

May leans back, SNIFFS, wipes the tears from her eyes and looks at Hunter.

MAY (CONT'D)
Thank you.

HUNTER
This isn't the time to chastise you, but please-
(he points to the table)
-get rid of that stuff. Go to the clinic if you need to.

May nods sheepishly; Hunter does not believe her, but says nothing more on the subject. She looks away from Hunter, grabs his hand and CLEARS her throat.

MAY
Do you think...that maybe...we could try...

HUNTER
No, May. No. I meant what I said in Atlanta, nothing's changed since then.

MAY
You're wrong about that: you've gotten better...and I haven't.

Hunter squeezes May's hand but says nothing.

INT. CARLO'S GARAGE - AFTERNOON

The automotive garage is a fluorescent-illumined concrete space within which six cars sit upon raised metal pillars; below the suspended automobiles perambulate three MECHANICS, looking up into the undersides of the vehicles, wiping oily fingers upon weathered rags. Hunter walks into the room fastening gray overalls over his white shirt. AUGUSTUS, a tall broad mechanic of fifty, picks his teeth with dirty nails and appraises Hunter.

AUGUSTUS
Glad you could join us working men, slick. Big party last night?

Hunter picks up his toolkit and walks toward a raised car.

HUNTER
A friend of mine had an emergency. I didn't get in until after five.

AUGUSTUS
Emergency. Sure.

Hunter walks beneath an upraised vehicle: wires hang from its underside like the bowels of an animal.

HUNTER
I'll stay late to make up the time. And I'd appreciate it if you don't call me a liar.

Hunter sets his toolbox down on his work station, CHINK, and looks at Augustus; the bear-sized man grins. Hunter looks away and types his code into his toolbox lock, BEEP, BEEP.

AUGUSTUS
Pretty sensitive for a ex-con.

Hunter stops dialing; he stands inert, containing himself.

HUNTER
If you want to continue this conversation after work, just let me know.

SKINNY MECHANIC
Lay off him Gus: he'll do better- and more- work than you do in a half day.

Augustus relents. Hunter opens up his toolkit, withdraws an air-impact wrench, CLICKS the battery into the housing and turns to the looming guts of the blue sports car above him.

EXT. CARLO'S GARAGE - LATER

The Mechanics, eating lunch, sit on milk crates behind the back of the garage in a rocky lot from which weeds erupt like brush fires; chicken bones surround Augustus' feet as if he were an ogre. On the far side of an orange dumpster, Hunter looks at a four-by-six inch piece of black glass (a vizphone) upon which shines the face of MRS. DENISE BILLINGHAM, his mother, a thin woman of fifty-eight years.

MRS. BILLINGHAM
I get worried when I don't hear from you for a while.

HUNTER
I don't have a lot to talk about. No reason to call just to complain: things are the way they are.

MRS. BILLINGHAM
I wanted to tell you that your father-- he's gotten a lot worse recently.

HUNTER
Sorry to hear that.

The two stares at each other for a moment; Mrs. Billingham breaks the silence.

MRS. BILLINGHAM
I know how you two are, but you should see him.

HUNTER
I don't think he'd appreciate the visit.

MRS. BILLINGHAM
He might not, but this is about you too. Isn't it better that you at least try to get some closure, for your own peace of mind?

Hunter reluctantly nods.

HUNTER
I'll see him.

INT. CARPETED HALLWAY - MORNING

Hunter brushes lint from his weathered brown corduroy jacket and slacks as he strides through the quiet, pastel corridors, past doors with small luminous rectangles on them. He stops at the penultimate door and reads the sign: the name is Fredrick Billingham, Jr.

A MALE ATTENDANT walks past Hunter, pushing a multi-tiered cart upon which bottled water, towels, pill bottles and several syringes lie.

Hunter watches the man pass, inhales deeply and presses the mother-of-pearl doorbell. Chimes RING gently within. A moment later the door- on smooth pneumatic hinges- swings wide.

For a moment, tremendous apprehension assails Hunter, but he stuffs it down and walks inside.

INT. HOSPICE ROOM - SAME

Hunter quietly pads across the carpeted, pastel limbo of the hospice room; the door shuts behind him as if blown by a friendly wind. Lying in a bed in the center of the room is FREDRICK BILLINGHAM, JR., an emaciated man of sixty-four years. He stares through the window at the mountain range outside, his sharp profile described by the late-day sun.

Hunter glances at his father's gaunt face; a shudder runs through him.

HUNTER
Dad...?

FREDRICK
I know I look awful. Let me know when you're done being shocked.

Hunter does not know how to respond. Fredrick begins to COUGH.

HUNTER
Should I send for someone?

FREDRICK
No. I'm tired of them knocking me out. Drugs aren't really *my* way.

Fredrick turns to son and eyes him meaningfully.

HUNTER
I'm still clean. How're you feeling today?

FREDRICK
Poorly.

Hunter waits for an elaboration that never comes.

HUNTER
I didn't know things were this advanced.

FREDRICK
I know you didn't. The receptionist- Laura- called up when you arrived in the lobby. She said that someone was here "claiming"-
(he COUGHS)
She said that someone was here "claiming" to be my son.
(MORE)

FREDRICK (CONT'D)
Laura knows Roy by sight, but she had no idea that I had two boys.

HUNTER
Are you trying to make me feel guilty? You haven't called me in years.

FREDRICK
The life you've led has been less than stellar. Prison.

Fredrick WHEEZES and then COUGHS, his entire body seized with the paroxysm. Hunter steps forward, but Fredrick waves him back.

HUNTER
Is there anything I can do for you?

FREDRICK
I know you don't talk with Roy these days, but let him know that things have fallen off in the last week. I'd like to spend some more time with him before I go.

HUNTER
I'll tell him.

Fredrick reaches over to the button on his night-stand and presses it, CLICK. The door to the hospice room swings open on its pneumatic hinges.

HUNTER (CONT'D)
I'll come by again.

Fredrick does not reply; Hunter, saddened, leaves the hospice room.

INT. HUNTER'S CAR - SAME

Hunter sits inside his stripped, utilitarian vehicle: it has mismatched seats and lacks accoutrements such as a i-player or an air conditioner. He is stuck in traffic, confined by cars ahead, beside and behind him. A car HONKS behind him.

HUNTER
That isn't helping asshole.

The car horn HONKS again. Hunter (manually) rolls down his window and leans his head out to face the car behind him.

HUNTER (CONT'D)
Stop that. We all want to get the hell out of here.

Hunter leans back inside and smolders; the car is silent.

EXT. OUTER SPACE / THE ORBIT OF THE MOON

The Superion broadcast satellite drifts toward the moon, trailing coiled wire like frozen spaghetti in the silent vacuum of space.

EXT. PINESGROVE CEMETARY - MORNING

The sky is bright and crisp; the trees, headstones and THIRTY MOURNERS are vibrant in the sharp clean atmosphere that has followed the storm. In front of the gathering stands ROY BILLINGHAM, a tall austere thirty-six year-old man with close-cropped blond hair, a pointed nose and a strong jaw. His arm is draped across the back of his mother, Mrs. Denise Billingham; she fingers her wedding band with a tremulous thumb. Both Billinghams stare at the closed coffin, mouths shut, eyes red.

Hunter, wearing an abraded, stands on the other side of his mother, aloof and remote. Aloof and remote, he looks at the coffin as if were a felled tree. He glances at his distraught mother and looks away almost instantly.

Mrs. Billingham glances at Hunter and then at Roy.

EXT. PINESGROVE CEMETARY - LATER

Rain pours from recently amassed clouds; Roy, holding an umbrella, shuts his mother and AUNT JENNIFER in the back of a black limousine, THUNK. The car pulls away; he turns around to face Hunter. The younger sibling holds and umbrella overhead.

HUNTER
Why’d you want to talk to me?

ROY
I found you a job.

HUNTER
(indignant)
I didn’t ask you to-

ROY
Mom asked me to find something for you, so I did.

HUNTER
Mom? Why?

ROY
She's very worried about finances these days. That hospice was far nicer than the one his insurance covered and it cost her- and me- a lot. And you still owe her for the rehab clinic and then afterwards.

Hunter, ashamed, acknowledges Roy's words with a single nod; he looks away from his sibling and CLEARS his throat.

HUNTER
What's the job?

ROY
There's an opening in the maintenance crew aboard the SDF-- fixing lights, running power cables and replacing monitors, regular stuff they installed because most of the ship doesn't work. You'll make two-to-three times what you do now, and they give you a cabin.

HUNTER
(facetious)
Maintenance crew on a military ship. A dream come true.

EXT. PERIMETER OF THE SIEGE-DEFENSE FORTRESS - MORNING

A canvas-covered ferry speeds away from the altered North Carolina shore toward the landed Cityship; the TWELVE PASSENGERS all have green duffel bags slung over their shoulders or at their feet. Amidst the dark-blue uniforms of military personnel are five people wearing brown, one-piece jumpsuits, including Hunter (wearing a tag on his chest: 'Hunter Billingham Certified SDF Maintenance, Clearance: 1'). He stares forward at the wall surrounding the SDF and then glances over at his brother.

Roy, in a sharp dark-blue uniform, stands beside a pretty man with blond hair and an easy smile, a thirty year-old southerner named DUSTY, the cynosure of the soldiers.

DUSTY
(Southern accent)
I simply could not tell her the truth. To lie to her was a kindness: to reshape the truth was the act of a gentleman.

ROY
So what did you say to her?

DUSTY
I said, “Yes darling, you have a lovely singing voice. Like an angel.”

ROY
Coward.

DUSTY
Is a lie a lie when it makes a woman happy?

ROY
Yes. Completely. But you have way too many girlfriends to start telling the truth now.

DUSTY
Is it wrong to be in love with more than one woman? Who says love must be in linear succession?

ROY
Women and lawyers.

The ferry slows down; Hunter looks ahead. The boat draws near a checkpoint gate in the thirty-foot-tall metal wall that juts from the water. (The barrier surrounds the entire perimeter of the Siege Defense Fortress.) Hunter looks up in the sky past the gate: two Naval Airborne helicopters patrol the air space, THWUP, THWUP, THWUP. He looks past the gate at the space-craft, a metropolis of gray and white steel.

INT. WATER-DOCK / SDF - MOMENTS LATER

The ferry is nestled against a corrugated platform of white steel; the soldiers have departed, the mechanics follow behind them, duffels slung on their shoulders.

Hunter tilts his head back and look up at the massive alien ship and the slender black threads that run along the curved walls of white metal.

He steps from the ferry onto the floor of the dock (the metal is so thick and dense that his footfall is almost inaudible).

INT. ENGINE AREA / SDF - MOMENTS LATER

The vast enclosure is the size of a warehouse: mismatched fluorescent light fixtures hang from the ceiling, illuminating the gray walls, tall white domes and stacked black boxes that fill the space. Six SOLDIERS are stationed within; they salute Oswald and ignore the Mechanics. Hunter follows NICOLAI, a fifty year-old Russian man into the room; they each carry extension cables on the shoulder of the jumpers.

Nicolai points his right index finger at a five-foot tall twenty-foot long bank of black boxes labelled 'Emergency Power Supply' from which trail hundreds of thick red cables, blue cables and green cables.

HUNTER
Why don't you guys run wires through the walls instead?

NICOLAI
There's no space: walls are solid metal. See those little threads running along surface?

Hunter looks at the nearest wall: dozens of thin black lines no thicker than sewing thread run across the gray surface in perfectly straight rows.

HUNTER
Those conduct electricity?

NICOLAI
If fusion driver functioned, those little threads would carry massive amounts of power throughout ship.

HUNTER
What happened to the fusion driver?

NICOLAI
It broke when SDF crashed and they haven't been able to fix it. It is supposed to sit right there.

Nicolai points to a fifteen-foot tall hemicylindrical niche in the wall to his left; twelve silver prongs jut from the middle of the recessed area into open space. The wall surrounding the niche is covered with myriad black threads and silver threads.

EXT. OUTER SPACE / THE ORBIT OF THE MOON - LATER

The malfunctioned Superion broadcast satellite floats toward the side of the moon not ever visible from Earth.

The satellite crosses the line of sun and shadow, almost blinking out of visible existence. An instant later, three slender green lights like shooting stars fire from the surface of the moon's dark side, lancing the satellite.

The Superion live-def Satellite spins, buckles and explodes.

INT. BELOW-DECKS HANGAR PASSAGE / SDF - LATER

Nicolai leads Hunter down a ramp, into a long hallway of gray metal. They near a door guarded by six SOLDIERS.

NICOLAI
Good afternoon soldiers.

The Soldiers nod curtly. Nicolai walks in front of the doorway; an oval plate in the floor CLICKS beneath him; the door disappears into the floor, FWISS.

HUNTER
How'd that door open if-

NICOLAI
Hypermagnetics. Some of the things on the craft still work, but they're all powered by very powerful groups of shielded magnets. Keep the Veritechs afloat too.

INT. VERITECH HANGAR - SAME

Nicolai leads Hunter to the edge of a railed platform overlooking a vast white metal enclosure that extends a hundred feet up, two hundred feet down and three hundred feet to either side.

Hunter looks across the way: the far wall is partitioned into eighty slots (four tiers with twenty slots in each tier)-- the overall view resembles that of an apartment complex with a wall removed.

Nestled within each fifty-foot wide, thirty-foot tall compartment is a silver and green aircraft, a sleek curvilinear vehicle resembling a bird, a jet and a rocket.

The nose of each craft is a sharp wedge above which is nestled blue cockpit “glass” (translucent metal); the wings curve gently up, vaguely suggesting a bird in flight; the three thrusters- one behind the central section and one on each wing- look like flowers wrought in silver. Each craft floats in the air utterly still, eight feet off of the ground, buoyed by magnets. The crafts are VERITECHS.

As Hunter stares at the Veritechs across the bay, the heaviness of dark years momentarily melts away.

Onto the platform steps the intrepid Englishwoman Joan (from the task force; now fifty-two). She wears an orange jacket over a blue uniform, the latter adorned with a patch reading ICAAT; she looks at Nicolai and then at Hunter.

JOAN
I need you two right now. Follow.

Joan turns from the duo and leaves the room. Hunter glances at Nicolai; the Russian rolls his eyes.

NICOLAI
I was going to warn you about the Englishwoman. She’s a bit- what they say in Britain?- ...daft.

JOAN (O.S.)
Yet not deaf. Come on, will you?

NICOLAI
And impatient. But she makes good biscuits and jelly.

JOAN (O.S.)
Scones. And. Preserves.

Nicolai and Hunter exit the hangar area: Hunter momentarily glances back at the bay of docked ships.

INT. PARTIALLY-COLLAPSED HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Joan walks up the dented hallway, the right side of which is buckled as if hammered by the fists of giants. Lights encased in blue water-boxes are affixed to the gray metal ceiling every fifteen feet; coiled tubes run along the wall and floor, vibrating like dyspeptic intestines. Hunter and Nicolai have a hard time watching their footing and keeping up with the hasty Englishwoman who dextrously navigates the very familiar corridor.

NICOLAI
It is not a race Miss Esterly

JOAN
You're wrong-- it *is* a race, always, every day to get as much stuff done before you die.
(she ducks beneath a pipe)
And please call me Joan.

NICOLAI
With a woman like you, I'd prefer to keep things formal.

The Russian engineer looks at Hunter and nods, knowingly. Joan steps over a bundle of THRUMMING tubes. Hunter steps over a vibrating black coil.

HUNTER
(to Nicolai)
You pumping water with this?

JOAN
Yes. Out. We're trying to recover some of the flooded parts of the ship-- that's why we hired on more people.

Joan stops before a rolling barricade that says 'Authorized Personnel Only.'

JOAN (CONT'D)
Also because some people choose not to work in the room we just drained.

HUNTER
What's in there?

JOAN
We don't yet know.

Joan slides the barricade away from the open portal and walks into the next room. Hunter and Nicolai follow.

INT. THE ROOM OF SPOKES - SAME

Magnetized light-boxes have been affixed to the dented white metal walls of the room; from seven-hundred small holes jut just as many metal spokes: slender metal rods with clear spheres at their termini. Joan, Nicolai and Hunter enter the room.

NICOLAI
You have done much in a week.

JOAN
You hear that?

Hunter notices a low HUMMING noise accompanied by three muted PITCHES; he rubs his temples.

HUNTER
I do. And feel it.

JOAN
That only happens when somebody is in here.

NICOLAI
I have things to do Miss Esterly.

JOAN
I wouldn't want to get in the way of you unclogging any stopped-up commodes.

Nicolai leaves the room; the HUMMING grows quieter; the three muted PITCHES become two muted PITCHES.

JOAN (CONT'D)
The more people in here, the more of those pitches you hear, and the louder the hum. It's best to work in pairs or alone.

Joan points to the far wall; rust and barnacles and a few pieces of seaweed obfuscate the surface; buckets with tools (chisels, grouting spades, wire brushes, etc.) lie on a rolling cart in the corner.

JOAN (CONT'D)
Use the wire brushes in those buckets to clear out the barnacles and growth. Mind the spokes.
(she turns from him)
I'll check up on you in three. If you feel queasy, step into the hall until it passes.

HUNTER
Do I get hazard pay for this?

JOAN
I wouldn't classify headaches and occasional nosebleeds as "hazards," but I'm English and not as dramatic or litigious as people here in the States.

Joan leaves; Hunter walks over to the buckets set upon the rolling cart, CRACKING his knuckles.

INT. SOLDIER BARRACKS - LATER

Twenty-six SOLDIERS, talking, playing video games on vizphones, playing cards or watching one of the six live-def screens affixed to the wall (each watcher wears an ear-plug so that the sounds do not clash) people the space. Seated in a corner playing chess are Roy and OSWALD WHITMAN, a thirty-six year-old African-American man with cheerful eyes. He touches his pawn for a moment, purses his lips and then removes his finger. Roy stares at the board abstractly.

ROY
Diana called.

Oswald advances the pawn two squares; he looks up at Roy, patiently awaiting more information.

ROY (CONT'D)
She apologized. Again. Said she missed me. Wanted to give me back the engagement ring, because.... well *because*.

OSWALD
Did you say anything?

ROY
Yeah. I said a few things.

OSWALD
I take it they weren't words of forgiveness.

ROY
No they weren't.

OSWALD
You still love her though.

Roy ponders and TAPS his queen.

ROY
That'll change.

OSWALD
It's been a year. And here's a completely crazy notion: did you ever consider forgiving her?

ROY
Fourteen months. And no, I never considered that option.

OSWALD
She made a mistake. The world isn't like this-

Oswald points to the chess board.

OSWALD (CONT'D)
It's not black and white squares-- it's more like a big gray field with some faint lines on it that you can barely see.

ROY
Are you defending what she did? She cheated on me.

OSWALD
No. But you haven't moved on and neither has she. Maybe you need to rethink your chiseled-in-granite condemnation.

Roy's mind roils with conflict; he shakes his head as if to clear the anger away.

ROY
This is why you win. You always distract me. And *you* play the white pieces, which is confusing.

The black man moves his white bishop in line with Roy's King.

OSWALD
Check.

INT. HUNTER'S QUARTERS - NIGHT

The gray room is lit by a standing lamp (with a rechargeable power source) and furnished with a cot, a plastic bureau and a small (empty) plastic shelf. Hunter CLEARS his throat and looks at the little glass lens in its top of his vizphone.

HUNTER
666. Open line.

The screen glows white.

HUNTER (CONT'D)
Connect to May Leung.

A still picture of May Leung appears on the screen: she is holding a microphone in her hand and singing in a night club. The cache image is replaced by a Live-Def transmission of the Asian woman in pajamas.

MAY
Hey Hunter. How're you? Did you see the Veritechs? Are they like you thought they'd be?

HUNTER
Yeah-- they're beautiful. How're you holding up?

MAY
I'm fine.

HUNTER
I know that "I'm fine." It means exactly the opposite. What's wrong?

MAY
I've been thinking a lot. It just seems that we still care so much about each other that-

HUNTER
May. Listen. We have history- a lot of it, good and bad- but I just don't see you that way anymore. Those feelings didn't survive rehab.

MAY
But I was there for you! When you were sentenced, when you were in jail, *I* was the one who visited you, not your family or friends or anyone else.

HUNTER
I won't ever forget that- truly I won't- but that doesn't mean we should be together. Not in that way.

May presses her lips together and shakes her head.

HUNTER (CONT'D)
Why don’t you go to New York and visit your cousin-- can’t he set up some gigs for you?

MAY
What does that have to do with us?

HUNTER
There *isn't* an *us*, May. Maybe if you moved on you wouldn’t be so stuck on that idea.

MAY
You’re not my goddam therapist.

May’s face disappears from the screen, BIP; the vizphone darkens to black, reflecting Hunter’s sad eyes.

Hunter rubs his temples as he sits upon the edge of his bed, enervated.

INT. HUNTER’S QUARTERS - SAME

Hunter, asleep in his slender mattress, is glazed with sweat. Beneath his eyelids, his irises flit randomly in groupings of three, fives, nines, fours...

...and then conform to a steady rhythm of twos, as a new heartbeat overrides his system, a pulsating unity, BA-BUM, BA-BUM, BA-BUM, BA-BUM, BA-BUM...

EXT. BLACK VOID

The black void of space.

BA-BUM. The blackness is salted with stars, distant and twinkling.

BA-BUM. A galaxy shaped like an iridescent jellyfish burgeons upon the tableau, a flower of luminance.

BA-BUM. The galaxy fills the panorama.

BA-BUM. The twenty-nine planets of a solar system within the galaxy spin around a vast red giant sun, one near its death.

BA-BUM. Between two gas giant planets lies a terrestrial world with clouds and an atmosphere-- an orange marble.

BA-BUM. A city of curvilinear buildings wrought in orange stone and covered with coruscating mosaics lies beside a field of lavender grass.

BA-BUM. Black oblongs loom over the city in the magenta sky like ebony whales; they spit an endless barrage of luminous green splinters into the city. Buildings BURST, cataracts of stone and dust. Small specks run from the toppled edifices; flame pours down from the sky.

BA-BUM. Between two gas giant planets lies the orange terrestrial world, scarred and seared and scorched; seven-hundred mile long columns of blue lightning leap from the sundered planet and into space.

BA-BUM. The columns of blue lightning speed toward a brown terrestrial planet-

CUT TO:

INT. HUNTER'S QUARTERS - SAME

A BUZZING alarm on Hunter's vizphone interrupts the dream. The man sits up in bed, shivering, his teeth CHATTERING. His skin is beaded with goosebumps.

INT. THE ROOM OF SPOKES - LATE AFTERNOON

Hunter and EDWARD (a beefy forty-seven year-old man) are scraping barnacles from the nooks in-between the spokes of the west wall. Joan, carrying a thermos with steaming coffee, walks into the room.

JOAN
Hunter. Nicolai said you wanted to talk to me?

HUNTER
I do.

JOAN
On with it then, I've agendas.

Hunter turns to the spiky-haired Englishwoman of fifty-two.

HUNTER
Do people usually have...strange dreams after they work in this room?

JOAN
Nobody’s said anything so far, but we just drained it last week. What’d you dream? Keep working while you tell me.

Hunter turns to the wall, raises his wire brush and speaks.

HUNTER
I saw outer space-
(he scrapes)
-a galaxy or universe different from our own.
(he scrapes)
Some ships went to one of the planets there and blew everything up-- annihilated it.

Hunter stops and looks at Joan; she SIPS her coffee.

JOAN
Keep scraping-- I’m thinking.

Hunter SCRAPES off a patch of barnacles; Edward looks at him.

EDWARD
Was the world orange? Did it have buildings covered with mosaics?

Hunter, surprised, looks at Edward; Joan looks at Edward and then at Hunter.

HUNTER
It did.

Joan looks at the two men.

JOAN
Keep scraping.

Hunter and Edward press their brushes to the steel and SCRAPE; Joan ponders the information; she presses her hands more firmly against her coffee mug to stop them from trembling.

JOAN (CONT'D)
If this is a joke, I’ll fire both of you.

EDWARD
I don’t believe in jokes: I haven’t laughed since I was young and gay.

Joan's sharp eyes flit across the spokes jutting from the walls of the room; Hunter and Edward SCRAPE continually.

JOAN
When I first entered the ship- I crawled into an area near this chamber- one now fallen to the seabed- and passed out. When my partner roused me, he said I'd been speaking some alien language.

Joan looks at the walls; the men SCRAPE.

JOAN (CONT'D)
And now these alien images in your dreams. I wonder if the SDF...if it's trying to communicate somehow. Like a fax, downloading images into your minds through sound or something.

HUNTER
Why this way?

JOAN
Maybe it's not strong enough to overpower a conscious, active mind? We know the ship is mostly inoperable. Perhaps this is the best it can do-- mess about in our subconscious.

HUNTER
What's it trying to tell us?

JOAN
There aren't lots of positive interpretations for what it's shown the two of you, are there?
(she sips her coffee)
I'll bring it up to the council, see if we can get more people working on this.

INT. SUPERION NETWORK CONTROL BOOTH - NIGHT

The control room for the Seattle-situated Live-Definition network is empty, excepting the slovenly computer-artist Andrew and a AFRICAN WOMAN of thirty.

Upon Andrew's monitor is another 'Hostess Template' displaying the face of a woman with blond hair, full lips but no nose or eyes. He types in a few words with his customized keyboard. The computer-generated hostess' lips turn purple.

ANDREW
You think purple lipstick is too garish?

The African Woman looks over at Andrew's monitor.

AFRICAN WOMAN
(slight accent)
Depends. Which show is she hosting?

ANDREW
A reality show. 'Trapped in a 119 Degree Sewer.'

AFRICAN WOMAN
I think-

The monitor BEEPS; the image on the screen is replaced by scrolling information; Andrew and the African Woman look at the data.

ANDREW
The rogue satellite's offline- must've hit something. Let's watch its demise. With chips.

He pulls a package of WOW! CURRY CHIPS from his drawer, plucks and CRUNCHES a few and then sets the bag on his desk. He starts typing; the data on his screen is replaced by a bright white image upon which two circular shadows move to the left.

AFRICAN WOMAN
Is that the moon? Are those craters?

ANDREW
Yes and I believe so.

Blackness swallows the image, wiping right to left.

AFRICAN WOMAN
Did it just black out?

Andrew looks at the bottom of the screen.

ANDREW
No...the log numbers are still scrolling-- I think it just went into shadow.

The dark monitor flashes green for a moment and then- over the black screen- the word ‘OFFLINE’ is superimposed.

AFRICAN WOMAN
Did it short out?

Andrew types in a few words; the image of the bright-white, sunlit moon is replayed; the satellite is soon engulfed by darkness; Andrew and his coworker watch the darkness for a moment; the green flash fills the screen. Andrew taps a ‘PAUSE’ key and then taps the ‘<<<’ key.

The black images on the screen play in reverse, frame by frame; when the green flash fills the screen, Andrew strikes the ‘PAUSE’ key. Andrew and the African Woman stare at the bright green screen.

AFRICAN WOMAN (CONT'D)
Can you make the image darker?

Andrew types in a command: the screen grows dim. The duo stares at the monitor, perplexed...and worried.

AFRICAN WOMAN (CONT'D)
Is that...what the hell is that?

Upon the moon’s dark side are a series of tiny rectangles and circles, their forms illuminated by the green light.

ANDREW
Those can’t be natural.

AFRICAN WOMAN
Are those...are those buildings?

ANDREW
Looks like it, right? Factories or something. On the side we never see.

EXT. SIEGE-DEFENSE FORTRESS / COMMAND TOWER - NIGHT

Atop the SDF, behind five spires, is a tall broad twenty-story building; lights shine behind the windows of the top floor.

INT. SUMMIT ROOM / COMMAND TOWER - SAME

The wooden table, brown rug and upholstered chairs are anachronisms within the white metal and blue “glass” interior of the room. Hanging upon the wall is a banner which reads, “The International Committee for the Allotment of Advanced Technologies, Established 2019.”

Seated at the kidney-shaped table are twenty-six multicultural ICAAT COMMITTEE MEMBERS, including three members from the original task force that explored the SDF: Joan, the Japanese man Kenjo (now sixty-three) and the German, Mattias Rheiner (now forty-nine). Most of them are nervous.

A forty-six year-old woman in uniform with serious eyes, taut blond hair and perfect posture named ADMIRAL LISA HAYES stands at the head of the table. BUFORD STONEWORTH, a heavy sixty-three year-old American with an impressive mustache, looks at Lisa and then back to the ICAAT Members. Lisa turns to Stoneworth.

STONEWORTH
No government claims any knowledge of this lunar settlement. Rheiner proposed that we send a few Veritechs to check it out straight away.

LISA
I recommend that we send satellites to gather intel first-- we know that whatever is on the moon is hostile. Satellites are expendable; Veritechs and pilots are not.

EXT. OUTER SPACE / THE NIGHT ORBIT OF THE EARTH - SAME

Variegated, brightly-colored and luminous broadcast satellites float above the portion of Earth fallen into night. A section of stars disappears, their view momentarily blocked by an oncoming mass, black as unlit space itself.

The dark fog envelops the satellites. Silent flashes and green lights pulse within the black veil; a few streams of green emerge from the cloud like falling stars.

INT. O'CONNORS SPORTS BAR - SAME

BEEFY MEN with plump cigars sit with their arms on the burnished wood of O'Connor's, watching the enormous live-definition broadcast of a soccer match in which a man with long curly blond hair pushes the ball up the field.

BEEFY MAN
He may look like a girl, he may talk like a girl, he may even cross his legs and hold a cigarette like a girl, but he sure can-

The screen darkens; the word 'Offline' shines upon the screen. The Beefy man looks at his peers.

BEEFY MAN (CONT'D)
Who can I punch to resolve this?

INT. SUMMIT ROOM / COMMAND TOWER SDF - SAME

The ICAAT members look at their vizphones, most of which read 'Offline'. Admiral Hayes looks from the frustrated representatives over to Stoneworth.

LISA
It's already started.

STONEWORTH
(to the ICAAT members)
Scramble to high alert!

Titlecard: The Remains of Iceland

EXT. OCEAN SURROUNDING ICELAND - MIDNIGHT

A cloud of black fog descends from the sky and speeds across the flattened, flooded remains of Iceland, a petrified lump from the first SDF crash.

Titlecard: The Himalayas

EXT. HIMALAYAS - SAME

The expanse of mountain is now a crater of molten white metal, charred stone and petrified lava. Black fog descends from the sky to survey the wreckage.

Titlecard: Yang-Tze River, China (8:20 AM -- concurrently, different time zone)

EXT. THREE GORGES DAMN - MORNING

Built against the flow of the Yang-Tze river is one of the largest dams in the world, a mass of concrete drawing power for many millions. Loud reports (CH-CH-CH-CH...) sound within the black fog floating above the enormous wall: a steady barrage of green magma-rounds CRACK into the concrete.

Fissures spread in all directions; the dam swells briefly and then BURSTS, hunks of stone larger than houses launching in all directions like confetti. The water sprays into the black fog and- for only an instant- outlines a large, roughly-humanoid shape in the water.

Titlecard: The Coast of North Carolina (8:04 PM -- concurrently, different time zone)

EXT. SIEGE-DEFENSE FORTRESS - SAME

One the distant horizon looms an oncoming black fog.

On the surface of the Siege Defense Fortress, a circular flap sinks from the surface (CLANK) and slides away to reveal a similarly-shaped opening.

A pillar of black metal covered with metal glyphs rises from the aperture, WHIRRR...and then abruptly halts with a deafening CLANK. The one-hundred-and-ten-foot tall obelisk wavers for a moment, unseen gears GRIND and then it falls into the hole it rose from, its sides scraping against the flap and eliciting SPARKS. Its collapse halts halfway down, accompanied by a thunderous BOOM.

A moment later, the moon shining upon the cityship is obscured by the fast-approaching black fog.

INT. SOLDIER BARRACKS COMMON ROOM / SDF - SAME

Forty-nine SOLDIERS sit in the common room; Dusty sits on a sofa polishing his cowboy boots. A female soldier of twenty-three years named FRANCINE plays a video-game depicting a hippopotamus covered in white fur driving a 1940s car on a winding mountain road delineated by giant metal spikes. A (smitten) male soldier sits beside her, watching.

SOLDIER
What happens if you hit the spikes?

FRANCINE
Flat tires.

SOLDIER
Do you get spares?

FRANCINE
Only twenty per level. Shit!

Francine rounds a sharp corner, narrowly missing a large spike, her tires SCREECHING.

BOOM! The wall of the barracks common room bulges inward; every soldier looks at the warped white metal.

Loud reports (CH-CH-CH-CH...) reverberate outside; thirty-two cantaloupe-sized dents pepper the wall; live-def monitors fall to the ground and CRACK; soldiers stumble back. The wall BURSTS apart; shrapnel and luminous magma-rounds rip into the soldiers. Francine and her admirer's heads are cleared from their shoulder by a giant flaming green bullet. SCREAMS and smoke fill the air.

Dusty, nearest to the door, runs from the room with almost preternatural speed.

INT. MESS HALL / SDF - SAME

The goulash flask, boneless rotisserie chicken, rice ball and salad cup food dispensers shake, rattled by EXPLOSIONS. Upon the uppermost Officer tier, Roy and Oswald leave their meals behind and retreat down to the bottom where eight MECHANICS, Hunter included, rise from their meals, confused by the activity.

Hunter watches his brother CLANG down the ramp.

HUNTER
(to Roy)
What's happening?

ROY
Get to Quadrant Five. Everyone.

HUNTER
Roy. I can help if you need-

ROY
Quadrant Five. Now.

Roy passes his brother by and continues toward the door, followed by Oswald.

Hunter looks at his maintenance crew peers: they are largely older, out-of-shape men with scared faces.

INT. BELOW-DECKS HANGAR PASSAGE / SDF - MOMENTS LATER

Dusty, barefoot, a piece of shrapnel in his right thigh and his right shoulder burned, runs up the hallway; Oswald and Roy come from the other direction.

Dusty arrives at the hangar entrance; the floor plate CLICKS beneath his bare feet. The magnetic door slides into the floor. Roy and Oswald reach the southerner.

ROY
(gasping)
Where are...the guards...the other pilots?

DUSTY
(gasping)
Dead or injured.

Roy's eyes widen for a moment. Dusty leans over, grabs the twist of steel embedded in his thigh and pulls it out.

DUSTY (CONT'D)
Mexico!

He flings the shard down; it CLANGS and spatters blood.

INT. FIFTH GALLEY BELOWDECKS / SDF - MOMENTS LATER

At the rear of the running mechanics is Hunter; he looks backward as often as he looks forward.

A BOOM shakes the ship, spilling a few Mechanics onto the white metal floor. Hunter, upright, stops and looks forward: the hallway up ahead is filled with black smoke; from within the inky cloud come several CRACKLES of light and a few weak MOANS. The mechanics stare at the cataract.

MECHANIC
What do we do now?

Hunter glances at the frightened men, shakes his head and turns around. He races back up the hall.

INT. VERITECH HANGAR - SAME

The three men step from the landing onto the railed, oval-shaped platform overlooking the hangar. Oswald walks over to the raised pedal in its floor.

ROY
What happened?

DUSTY
They hit the barracks. Don't know if anyone else got out.

ROY
Any idea who's attacking us?

DUSTY
No. The gunfire...wasn't gunfire. It's like the magma-rounds the Veritechs fire only-

OSWALD
Hold on guys.

Oswald steps on the pedal, CLACK. The platform disengages from the wall with a gentle THUNK. On a segmented arm, the railed oval glides across the hangar, over the water, toward the landing on the other side.

MALE VOICE (V.O.)
(through the loud-speaker)
All ICAAT members are to proceed to Quadrant Five. All pilots are to board Veritechs and stand by for further instructions.

OSWALD
Is this really happening?

For a brief moment, the unreality of the situation presses on Roy, Dusty and Oswald. The platform connects to the landing on the Veritech wall, the THUNK grounding the three soldiers.

The trio run off of the landing, onto gray-steel catwalks from which extend other catwalks and ladders. The platform disengages, THUNK; running, Roy glances back to the opposite side of the hangar. Hunter stands on the far side, awaiting the platform.

ROY
Get out of here!

HUNTER
There's nobody here and I can help-

ROY
No. Go.

Hunter does not reply...and he does not leave. Roy, incredulous, shakes his head, but continues toward his Veritech, following behind Oswald and Dusty.

Hunter climbs onto the platform and steps on the pedal, CLACK; the platform disengages (THUNK) and carries him toward the opposite wall.

Oswald ignites the rear thrusters on his Veritech, FWASH; the craft speeds forward into the dark cavity ahead.

The platform carrying Hunter reaches the landing on the compartmentalized Veritech wall, THUNK.

Roy ignites the engine of his Veritech, FWASH; the craft speeds into the darkness ahead. Dusty ignites his central thrust the moment Roy is gone and jets forward, FWASH.

Hunter beelines across a catwalk, his boots POUNDING on the gray steel, his brown one-piece uniform stained with sweat until he reaches a magnetically-buoyed Veritech. He runs toward the nose cone.

Hunter runs beneath the silver nosecone of the Veritech and looks up at its smooth underside. He taps a small lavender oval atop the silver metal hull, PLINK: a flap opens above Hunter, VRRR; he lunges forward so that it does not knock into him. In the angled hatch-door is a contoured chair cushioned with dark blue impact-jelly.

Hunter seats himself in the crash chair; it envelops his back and legs comfortably, conforming and adhering. An instant later, the flap lifts and seals Hunter inside the craft.

INT. VERITECH COCKPIT - SAME

The walls of the cockpit are lined with blue impact-jelly. A curved screen two feet tall and three feet wide stretches in front of him, compressing a 360 view into 180 degrees: the pilot can see in all directions by looking at the image (the opposite side of the hangar and everything ahead of him is visible but compressed thin). Above the screen is a slanted plane of blue "glass" admitting a true view outside. A cane-shaped guidestick juts from the floor of the craft, adorned with crescent-shaped buttons.

The face of COMMODORE PRESTON MEYERS, a weathered man of fifty, flashes on his screen; he looks at Hunter, befuddled and concerned.

PRESTON
Who are you and why have you boarded this craft?

HUNTER
Hunter Billingham-- I can help. I have experience wi-

PRESTON
Not with me. Get out of that Veritech. Now. We're in crisis.

HUNTER
I'm here: your men aren't. Seems like a bad time to stick to procedure. I can help.

PRESTON
We're not going to debate the matter.

HUNTER
You're right about that.

Hunter looks around the perimeter of the screen, descries and then twists the communications knob; Preston's face disappears.

He looks up: a foot-long diagram of the Veritech shines upon the ceiling-- lavender lines on black. Hunter CLICKS and holds down the guidestick starter and then reaches his left hand up; he taps the central thruster on the icon, PLINK.

EXT. VERITECH HANGAR - SAME

The rear thruster on the Veritech flashes blue flame with a FWASH. The craft surges forward into the tunnel ahead, startling the pilot within.

INT. VERITECH COCKPIT - SAME

Hunter clumsily steers along the gently-curving passage, familiarizing himself with the very sensitive controls. Ahead of him, the route opens into the launch lane: *he is speeding directly toward two other Veritechs.*

Hunter jerks the guidestick away to avoid the other two crafts; his Veritech wobbles for a moment and then dips. Hunter pulls back on the guidestick, albeit too virulently; the craft tilts backwards and THUMPS the floor of the lane.

HUNTER
Christ, this thing's touchy.

Hunter CLICKS the black button on the side of the guidestick.

INT. LAUNCH LANE / SDF - SAME

The rear engine of Hunter's Veritech cuts off abruptly, FWUP. The craft BANGS the gray steel floor and skids, trailing a wake of sparks like a luminous rooster tail, SCREEEEEECH.

INT. VERITECH COCKPIT - SAME

The launch lane wobbles upon the 360-screen.

HUNTER
Hell.

EXT. SIEGE-DEFENSE FORTRESS - SAME

Roy, Dusty and Oswald speed their Veritechs toward the black fog in front of the Command Tower.

INT. VERITECH COCKPIT (ROY) - SAME

Roy looks at the black fog upon his 360-screen; translucently superimposed over the black fog are the faces of Dusty and Oswald.

ROY
Oswald...any idea what that is?

OSWALD
It's not anything I recognize. Looks like a cloaking system, though not of human design.

ROY
Magma-rounds. Staccato barrages on my mark.

EXT. SIEGE-DEFENSE FORTRESS - SAME

An appendage bearing a weapon drops from the underside of each Veritech's right wing with a sharp CLANK; the oval end of each cannon is segmented into nine barrels.

INT. VERITECH COCKPIT (ROY) - SAME

Roy STOMPS his lower gunpedal.

EXT. SIEGE-DEFENSE FORTRESS - SAME

Muzzle flashes spin clockwise around the nine cylinders of Roy's polybarrel, CH-CH-CH-CH-CH: red magma-rounds lance into the black fog, where they seemingly disappear. Dusty and Oswald fire into the fog, CH-CH-CH-CH, the rounds are swallowed by the black.

Heralded by a steady tattoo (CH-CH-CH), green magma-rounds burst out of the black fog at the Veritechs.

The pilots pull back on their guidesticks; the wings pivot; the Veritechs break in an almost perpendicular sweep and soar up in different directions; the green magma-rounds speed harmlessly into the night, out over the ocean in which they trace firework reflections.

INT. VERITECH COCKPIT (DUSTY) - SAME

Dusty loops fully around and dives back at the black fog; he taps the center of his 360-screen, PLINK, and STOMPS his foot on the lower gunpedal.

DUSTY
Let's see what's under that skirt.

EXT. SIEGE-DEFENSE FORTRESS - SAME

Red magma-rounds BURST from the undercarriage cannon of Dusty's Veritech, a five-second barrage circling around the nine cylinders of his polybarrel, CH-CH-CH-CH-CH-CH-CH...

A flash of red light illuminates the dark night, followed by a BOOM. The black fog begins to dissipate...dissolving weirdly, almost like television static; gray smoke rises from beneath the electric veil.

INT. VERITECH COCKPIT (ROY) - SAME

Roy eyes the disintegrating black fog through his 360-screen.

ROY
Let's go on legs.

EXT. SIEGE-DEFENSE FORTRESS - SAME

The Veritechs angle in for a landing. From the bottom of each Veritech emerge two backwards-bending silver "legs" that terminate in hemispherical "feet" (flat side down).

The three Veritech's land upon their feet, CLUNK; their "knees" absorb all of the impact. Upon their stork-like legs, the crafts pivot around to face the vanishing black static.

Standing before the Command Tower is a twenty-foot tall metal being: its studded, jet-black torso is akin to a crab's, yet it stands upright on three humanoid legs; a tear-shaped (point-down) head protrudes from the center of its chest. Its right arm terminates with eighteen finger-like digits; its left arm supports several tools and a polybarrel cannon. This is an INVID.

INT. VERITECH COCKPIT (ROY) - SAME

Roy is momentarily confused by the inert mechanical being that stands before him. Without warning, the Invid lifts its cannon arm and fires a barrage of green magma-rounds directly at the Veritechs, pealing reports, CH-CH-CH-CH. Roy slams his guidestick to the left.

EXT. SIEGE-DEFENSE FORTRESS - SAME

Oswald's Veritech gets nailed in the leg- BWAN- and tips forward; Roy's craft takes a glancing round in the wing, PANG; Dusty bounds into the air, retracting the legs of his craft.

The Invid lunges forward, wires HISSING and CRACKLING.

INT. VERITECH COCKPIT (DUSTY) - SAME

Dusty pulls back his guidestick and spins his craft around; he centers and taps the Invid on his 360-screen, PLINK and then STOMPS his upper gunpedal.

EXT. SIEGE-DEFENSE FORTRESS - SAME

A barrage of red magma-rounds spray out of Dusty's polybarrel (CH-CH-CH-CH) and pound into the Invid, through its armor. Its cannon arm falls to the ground, trailing SPITTING, HISSING, CRACKLING wires.

The crustaceous giant topples forward, BOOMING upon the white steel of the SDF. Smoke, dark fluid and motes of light spill from the thirty-eight holes rent into its black shell. Roy, Oswald and Dusty train their guns upon the felled attacker.

Overhead, five more Veritechs speed off: the lines of their bright thrusters score the night like a rake.

INT. VERITECH COCKPIT (ROY) - SAME

Roy looks at the Invid on his screen; he taps his zoom triangle, his shot tightens: smoke and sparks and black fluid pour from the nine holes rent into its armor.

ROY
Is that...is that a *robot*?

OSWALD
It looks like it. I'm not seeing any tissue, bone or organs.

Preston's appears on Roy's screen.

PRESTON
Captain. Secure and proceed-- Throwing Star initiative.

ROY
Understood Commodore.

INT. LAUNCH LANE / SDF - SAME

Two Veritechs speed up the launch lane, past Hunter's stalled, magnetically-buoyed craft, FWASH; the stationary Veritech wobbles in the smoky wake of the departing vessels.

The frustrated twenty-eight year-old curses inside the sound-proof cockpit, mouthing a string of expletives.

INT. VERITECH COCKPIT (HUNTER) - SAME

Hunter watches the two Veritechs speed from the launch lane, into the night sky; in the distance, partially visible through the hanging smoke, three Veritechs fly by.

Hunter looks at the bottom of the cockpit; two oval-shaped cavities are hollowed in the upward-angled floor (beyond them sit the upper and lower gunpedals). He presses his boots inside the holes, CLACK, CLACK.

INT. LAUNCH LANE / SDF - SAME

Two legs spring out from the bottom of the slowly-spinning craft, HWRUNK, HWRUNK, and magnetically adhere, C-CLANG. The Veritech stands on the back-bending appendages, hunched forward.

INT. VERITECH COCKPIT (HUNTER) - SAME

Hunter kicks his right leg forward, CLACK.

INT. LAUNCH LANE / SDF - SAME

The right leg of the Veritech raises on its hip joint, curls at the knee and swings forward, the movement smooth and accompanied by a dim WHIRRR. The flat bottom of the hemispherical foot (in which are embedded both magnets and jets) CLANGS against the gray metal of the launch lane.

INT. VERITECH COCKPIT (HUNTER) - SAME

Hunter alternately kicks his feet forward- CLACK, CLACK, CLACK, CLACK- and presses the guidestick to the left.

INT. LAUNCH LANE / SDF

The legs continue their even CLANGING strides and rotate, causing the Veritech to veer left. As the Veritech turns away from the wall, the right wing SCRAPES along the side of the passage; the craft, unbalanced, begins to topple.

INT. VERITECH COCKPIT (HUNTER) - SAME

Hunter quickly pulls his boots from the foot cavities and then stomps on the white bar in front of them, CLACK.

INT. LAUNCH LANE / SDF - SAME

The legs retract: the falling biped turns back into a magnetically-buoyed jetrocket.

INT. VERITECH COCKPIT (HUNTER) - SAME

Hunter, relieved, inhales deeply. His floating craft slowly spins in place...like the arm of a clock. The nose of craft pans toward the exit of the launch lane.

Standing at the point of egress, partially-visible through the smoke of exhaust, silhouetted against the dark-blue night sky, are two twenty-foot tall INVIDS. Hunter's slowly turning craft stabilizes; he stares through the blue glass at the trespassers, stunned.

He dials on the communications knob; superimposed upon his 360-screen is the diaphanous face of Commodore Meyers.

PRESTON
Get the hell off the line-

HUNTER
Sir. Two...things just entered the launch lane. Upright crabs. Tall and with guns.

PRESTON
They see you?

HUNTER
They probably think the ship's abandoned-- there's a lot of smoke in here and my thrusters are off.

PRESTON
Dial on your cannons-- we can't risk them getting to the hangars.

Hunter looks at the crustaceous menaces speeding up the lane.

HUNTER
Tell me how to shoot.

PRESTON
Tap the targets on your screen, arm the guns with the buttons above your shoulders and stomp the pedals.

Hunter taps each Invid on the 360-screen, PLINK, PLINK; he raises his foot over the lower gunpedal and makes two fists. He GROWLS as he pounds the two deploy buttons on the walls, SMACK, SMACK.

INT. LAUNCH LANE / SDF - SAME

Two “arms” spring out from underneath the wings of Hunter’s Veritech: one with a polybarrel magma-cannon; the other with a fusilladeer (a side-winding missile-launcher).

The Invids swivel to face the Veritech.

INT. VERITECH COCKPIT (HUNTER) - SAME

Hunter STOMPS the lower gunpedal and then the upper gunpedal.

INT. LAUNCH LANE / SDF - SAME

Hunter’s polybarrel fires, CH-CH-CH-CH-CH; red magma-rounds dig into the Invids in a series of CLANGS; an instant later, ten missiles speed from the Veritech’s fusilladeer, the trails they weave winding through air like cursive love-letters written in smoke.

The missiles strike the Invids, the floor, the walls and the ceiling, exploding in a series of pealing BABWOOOOOMS.

INT. VERITECH COCKPIT (HUNTER) - SAME

The surge of the explosion strikes the Veritech like a fist, WHAM; Hunter SLAMS sideways into the impact-jelly lining the cockpit.

INT. LAUNCH LANE / SDF - SAME

The craft careens wildly back up the launch lane, the crest of a wave of smoke and shrapnel and charred detritus. The rear of the spinning Veritech SLAMS into the far wall.

INT. VERITECH COCKPIT (HUNTER) - SAME

Hunter SLAMS his head into the impact-jelly; a pained GROAN escapes him. Preston’s face looks up at him from the screen.

PRESTON
What’s the status?

Hunter looks up the launch lane: it is filled with smoke; the ceiling dribbles molten metal.

HUNTER
I think they're-

A twenty-fingered Invid fist fills the 360-screen and POUNDS the Veritech's fusilladeer, knocking it loose to the floor, WHANG. The one-armed Invid, dented, soldered and pierced, its innards SPARKING and HISSING STEAM, reaches forward-

INT. LAUNCH LANE / SDF - SAME

Muzzle flashes spin around the Veritech's polybarrel, CHCHCHCH; red magma-rounds tear into the Invid, ripping apart its armor, laying bare the network of arterial wires and processors and gears and rotors and turbines housed within.

INT. VERITECH COCKPIT (HUNTER) - SAME

Hunter, breathing heavily and sweating profusely, looks away from the remains of the destroyed Invid, back up the launch lane.

The smoke has dissipated: the other Invid lies in nine different pieces along the lane, the walls surrounding the dismantled attacker are warped and sundered.

Titlecard: Just Outside Spangdahlem, Germany

EXT. SPANGDAHLEM AIR BASE - LATER

Many of the fighter planes of the German Air Force have been damaged or destroyed; all of the buildings are on fire. An Invid riddled with red magma-rounds falls from the sky to the concrete runway; the BWOOMING impact creates a forty foot-wide crater.

The responsible pilots- Dusty and Oswald- circle their Veritechs around and rocket off, FWASH.

INT. SUMMIT ROOM / COMMAND TOWER - SAME

The ICAAT representatives look at Lisa Hayes.

LISA
That these robots attacked us just after we discovered their moon settlement, makes me think it's vulnerable.

LAI FUSHAN
How many Veritechs do you want?

LISA
The ten up and running: we can't wait for other pilots to get here. We need to strike <u>now</u>.

INT. VERITECH COCKPIT (HUNTER) - MOMENTS LATER

Hunter dials on the commknob; Preston's face reappears.

PRESTON
Status?

HUNTER
I stopped them.

PRESTON
ICAAT approved a Veritech strike force to go to the moon. We need all pilots on hand, and you've had some training apparently.

Hunter is stunned- and intimidated- by the request.

HUNTER
There has to be someone better qualified.

PRESTON
Many, but every other pilot aboard the SDF is dead and six have gone down abroad. You've done better than most against these things and most importantly: *you're here now*.

INT. VERITECH COCKPIT (HUNTER) - LATER

Hunter, speeding his craft over the peninsula of Florida, sees two other Veritechs on the horizon; the faces of Dusty and Oswald appear on his 360-screen.

OSWALD
Any questions about the craft before we're beyond?

HUNTER
What about air?

OSWALD
See those vents in the cockpit, above the glass?

Hunter looks above the blue glass and sees a row of vents.

OSWALD (CONT'D)
The mechanism inside that breaks down superdense ice and pumps out oxygen; the nodes below it scrub carbon dioxide.

HUNTER
How much ammunition do I have?

OSWALD
The magma rounds are chipped from a superdense granite- you won't run out of that- and a fully-packed fusilladeer has two-hundred and forty-two missiles.

DUSTY
If you need more than that, things're probably going poorly.

Three other Veritechs speed toward the trio; Roy's face flashes on Hunter's 360-screen. Oswald and Dusty dial off, leaving the brothers alone on the open line.

ROY
Hunter, you're okay to do this?

HUNTER
I'll manage.

Roy appraises Hunter briefly- concerned and doubtful- but nods and dials himself off.

EXT. OUTER SPACE / THE ORBIT OF THE EARTH - LATER

Nine Veritechs emerge from the troposphere and speed past the wreckage of the Invid-destroyed satellites.

Within the group are Roy, Dusty, Oswald, Hunter and five others, including a golden-haired African-American woman of twenty-seven years named CLAUDIA, an intense Native American male a year younger named CHEVEYO and a big, red-headed man named PATRICK.

INT. SUMMIT ROOM / COMMAND TOWER SDF - SAME

Joan has sequestered herself from the vituperative conversation that the ICAAT members are involved in. She taps her earbud, CLICK.

JOAN
Where Nicolai? Be precise.
(she listens)
Head there now. Bring Edward and whoever's available-
(she listens)
Then get galoshes.

Joan hurries from the room.

LISA
Miss Esterly we're in-

JOAN
Something's come up. Literally. In sector East 19.

The hypermagnetic door slides away before the spry woman; she is gone before her words are done reverberating.

INT. HALF-SUBMERGED HALLWAY / SDF - MOMENTS LATER

Joan, submerged in water up to her waist, wades forward alongside the unhappy Russian engineer Nicolai, the beefy man Edward and two other MECHANICS who each carry waterproof flashlights.

NICOLAI
It happened during attack. Came up by itself.

JOAN
Must be some automatic response to the robot presence. Defense system, alarm, something like that.

NICOLAI
I am not disagreeing with you.

Nicolai points his flashlight to the right; the circle of luminance delineates seaweed, the eyes of frightened fish and the bottom of a rusty ladder.

NICOLAI (CONT'D)
We go up here.

EXT. OUTER SPACE / THE ORBIT OF THE MOON - LATER

The nine Veritechs, a half-mile between each craft, fly in V formation above the crater-denuded orb; white tongues of flame propel them onward. Their shadows skim across the sunlit terra like black birds.

INT. VERITECH COCKPIT (ROY) - SAME

Roy looks at his 360-screen, upon which are superimposed the faces of all eight pilots.

ROY
This is close to where that satellite was ambushed. Guns ready.

EXT. OUTER SPACE / THE ORBIT OF THE MOON - SAME

Arms bearing magma-polybarrels and fusilladeers spring from beneath the wings of the speeding crafts, silent in the vacuum of space. The nine Veritechs are twenty miles from the edge of sunlight and shadow. (Scientific Note: on the moon, because of the lack of atmosphere, the line that divides night and day is a sharp, clear delineation.)

INT. VERITECH COCKPIT (HUNTER) - SAME

Hunter sits in his cockpit, silent and tense, as if awaiting the verdict of a serious medical examination; sunlight streams in through the blue glass. Roy’s face flashed onto the screen.

ROY
Dusty. It’s time.

Dusty’s face flashes onto the screen.

DUSTY
(grinning)
Sir- If I don't make it- tell each one I intended to get down on one knee the day I got back.

ROY
Go.

INT. VERITECH COCKPIT (DUSTY) - SAME

Dusty taps the rear and wing thrusters on the icon above his head three times in rapid succession, PLINK, PLINK, PLINK.

EXT. OUTER SPACE / THE ORBIT OF THE MOON - SAME

On the far left side of the V formation, Dusty's Veritech- propelled by three bright bursts of power- speeds ahead of the group toward the lunar night.

INT. VERITECH COCKPIT (DUSTY) - MOMENTS LATER

Dusty's grin disappears, as does the streaming sunlight. On the distant horizon, upon the surface of the shadowed moon, Dusty sees several flashes of light.

DUSTY
I see some activity.

The luminous dots arrange themselves in a line and rise from the surface, carrying little black flecks darker than the starlit space behind them. Dusty taps a forward-pointing triangle on the top lip of the 360-screen, PLINK; the image tightens, the forward horizon fills the monitor-- the shapes of twelve INVIDS are discernible. He taps the backward-pointing triangle beside the first; the normal 360 view returns, showing all directions.

DUSTY (CONT'D)
Twelve approaching.

Dusty CLEARS his throat and- without looking away from the 360-screen- reaches beneath his seat.

INT. VERITECH COCKPIT (ROY) - SAME

ROY
Concentric formation.

EXT. OUTER SPACE / THE ORBIT OF THE MOON - SAME

The eight Veritechs scramble out of V formation and quickly regroup in a wide circle nearly three miles in diameter.

Hunter overshoots his mark and then corrects back to the spot.

INT. VERITECH COCKPIT (DUSTY) - SAME

Dusty, now wearing a cowboy hat, looks at the oncoming foes; his eyes are hard and fixed. He taps and runs his finger across the 360-screen, PLINK, and then STOMPS the upper gunpedal twice.

Twenty speeding missiles corkscrew toward the approaching silhouettes.

Luminous crescents and orbs flash like fireflies on the horizon-- silent explosions. Two black humanoid shapes fall toward the moon's surface; the ten remaining foes speed toward Dusty.

DUSTY
I just tapped their shoulders.

Dusty yanks back his throttle; the moon lifts away underneath the looping craft. He taps the central thruster above him twice, PLINK, PLINK.

EXT. OUTER SPACE / THE ORBIT OF THE MOON - SAME

Dusty's Veritech surges across the moon's dark side whence it came; ten Invids speed after the craft, each propelled by the long triple flames spraying from their backs.

INT. VERITECH COCKPIT (DUSTY) - SAME

Dusty looks at the edges of his 360-screen: the Invids are directly behind him. He looks ahead: the line between night and day gleams on the horizon.

The southerner glances again at the Invid; a series of green flashes sparkle amidst the ten robots-- magma-rounds fly toward him.

Dusty leans forward on his guidestick; his craft plummets toward the surface of the moon, yet continues toward the sunlight.

INT. VERITECH COCKPIT (ROY) - SAME

Roy, still in sunlit space, looks ahead at the line of night.

ROY
Cut thrusters.

EXT. OUTER SPACE / THE ORBIT OF THE MOON - SAME

The engines of the Veritech's go dim; the eight sunlit crafts, less than a mile away from the edge of night, maintain their circular formation.

INT. VERITECH COCKPIT (DUSTY) - SAME

Upon the 360-screen, the southerner taps the line where night meets day and *runs his finger along it*, PLINKPLINKPLINKPLINK; he STOMPS his upper gunpedal three times.

Sidewinding missiles speed from his craft, toward the surface of the moon, fanned out in a broad line.

EXT. SURFACE OF THE MOON - SAME

The thirty missiles explode in a line across the moon's surface, sending up an enormous wall of lunar silt and dust and stone: on Dusty's side of the wall, it is night; on Roy's side of the wall, it is day.

INT. VERITECH COCKPIT (ROY) - SAME

Roy stares at the wall of lunar detritus floating in the air.

ROY
Magma-cannons on everything after Dusty.

EXT. OUTER SPACE / THE ORBIT OF THE MOON - SAME

Dusty speeds his Veritech through the wall of debris...and straight through the ring of awaiting fighters.

An instant later, ten INVIDS burst through the wall of floating detritus, into bright sunlight.

The awaiting Veritech's fix their polybarrels on the crustaceous tripeds. Like a meteor shower, magma-rounds hammer into the ambushed Invids.

The barrage is relentless; the Invids are pulverized, their sparking, steaming, dripping innards laid bare.

INT. VERITECH COCKPIT (HUNTER) - SAME

Hunter, anxious but focused, stares at the 360-screen ahead of him, filled with the floating limbs and sundered carapaces of the Invids. Roy's face appears on the screen.

ROY
Dusty, back to point.

EXT. SURFACE OF THE MOON - LATER

Dusty, scouting ahead, keeps his speeding Veritech close to the moon's surface; his thruster is a glowing spike in the dark lunar night.

Directly ahead of his craft, concealed within a crater, a circular metal disk retracts to reveal a deep black pit twenty-eight feet in diameter.

INT. VERITECH COCKPIT (DUSTY) - SAME

Dusty watches his 360-screen (upon which the black pit is indistinguishable): against the starlit space of the horizon he sees several dark, oblong shapes.

DUSTY
Sir, I see the buildings on the-

A pillar of white flame bursts from the lunar surface directly ahead of Dusty; he jams his guidestick to the left and veers around the column of white fire.

Ahead of him two more thirty-foot-tall columns of bluish-white fire burst from the ground.

DUSTY (CONT'D)
Mexico!

Dusty angles his craft sideways and speeds between them.

DUSTY (CONT'D)
Watch yourself fellas, it looks like they've set some traps.

Upon the horizon, two...then four...then twelve...then twenty pillars of blue white fire erupt from the surface of the moon, spraying hotly into the sky.

Dusty pulls back on his throttle and steers spaceward.

INT. VERITECH COCKPIT (HUNTER) - SAME

Upon his 360-screen, Hunter sees bright blue stalks of fire spear into the sky. His heart-pounds, but he remains silent. Roy's face flashes upon the screen.

ROY
Let's go spacew-

Three pillars of blue-white flame burst from the ground immediately ahead of Hunter and the squadron.

INT. VERITECH COCKPIT (HUNTER) - SAME

In the side of his 360-screen, Hunter witnesses Patrick's Veritech consumed by a pillar of flame and explode.

Hunter, shocked by the near casualty, instinctively SLAMS his guidestick sideways to veer away from the wall of fire.

EXT. OUTER SPACE / THE ORBIT OF THE MOON - SAME

All of the Veritechs arc back in a 180-degree loop, excepting Hunter who banks abruptly right and collides with Claudia's ship.

INT. VERITECH COCKPIT (CLAUDIA) - SAME

BOOM. The craft shakes; Claudia GRUNTS; the impact-jelly expands around her, absorbing the blow. The vessel caroms wildly.

INT. VERITECH COCKPIT (HUNTER) - SAME

The craft spins; Hunter lurches forward; the impact-jelly grips his shoulders and torso to keep him in place, but his head SMACKS against the wall.

His eyes roll back in his head as he loses consciousness; his iris flit beneath his eyelids in groups of two...

EXT. BLACK VOID

The black void of space.

BA-BUM. A galaxy shaped like an iridescent jellyfish burgeons upon the tableau, a flower of luminance.

BA-BUM. The twenty-nine planets of a solar system within the galaxy spin around a vast red giant sun, one near its death.

BA-BUM. Columns of blue lightning speed toward a brown terrestrial planet.

BA-BUM. The surface of the brown planet is a marshland, within which grow trees with enormous brown leaves spotted with yellow. The air is filled with brown fog. STILTDOGS, bald gray canines with overlong legs and six eyes, wander the algae-coated waters dipping their faces down to drink the flora through mesh-covered mouths.

BA-BUM. The brown sky above the canines is rent by thirteen columns of blue lighting. Thirteen whale-shaped ships, silhouetted against the sky materialize at the terminus of each shaft. A moment later, the lightning chases itself into the rear thrusters of the ships, FWAZZT.

BA-BUM. The six-eyed hounds SPLASH through the marshlands, running on their giraffe-like legs toward steaming orifices into which they clamber and hide. The ships fire ninety-six thousand green magma-rounds at the canine enclave, CHCHCHCH-

BA-BUM. The barrage strikes the marsh; the algae atop the water BURSTS aflame; the CRACKLING fire burns up the legs and into the mouths of HOWLING Stiltdogs. The ships overhead fire another barrage toward the long-legged canines, CHCHCH-

BA-BUM. The marshland is gray; wisps of smoke rise into the air from the exposed ribcages of charred Stildogs and blackened trees. The ships circle overhead like sharks.

BA-BUM. The sky above and behind the circling ships starts to glow with iridescent light. A luminous craft the shape of a kidney fills the sky, from horizon to horizon; the surface of the massive vessel coruscates like television static.

BA-BUM. The kidney-shaped craft fires a sheet of static. The sheet of scintillating particles passes through the foremost craft with a HISS;

the oblong ship summarily plummets from the sky and crashes into the marshland, where it BURSTS into a welter of ash and soot. The other ships flee the planet, propelled by blue lightning.

CUT TO:

INT. VERITECH COCKPIT (HUNTER) - SAME

ROY
Hunter!

Hunter wakes up, space and the moon spinning crazily on his 360 screen.

EXT. OUTER SPACE / THE ORBIT OF THE MOON - SAME

Claudia and Hunter's Veritechs spin out of orbit away from the moon. The right wing of Claudia's craft trails sparks; her magma-cannon dangles, motes of light dripping from its nine barrels. Hunter's Veritech has a dented hull.

The other five Veritechs congregate a mile from the surface; Dusty loops down and joins them an instant later.

INT. VERITECH COCKPIT (ROY) - SAME

Roy glances away from his cockpit glass- through which glare the blue pillars of fire- and dials onto the open line.

ROY
Claudia, you alright?

Claudia flashes onto his screen, rubbing her neck and frowning.

CLAUDIA
Yes Sir.

ROY
Hunter?

Hunter flashes on; he nods, frustrated and embarrassed.

HUNTER
Yeah. I'm fine.

ROY
Oswald-- any idea what the hell's going on down there?

INT. VERITECH COCKPIT (OSWALD) - SAME

Oswald dials himself on the open line; Roy and Claudia remain, Hunter flashes off.

OSWALD
Sir, they look like thrusters. Very big ones.

Titlecard: Indian Ocean, Coast of Thailand

EXT. BROAD BEACH OF THAILAND - NOON

The calm, dark ocean water abruptly stirs; spume delineates the jagged edges of rising waves. The PEOPLE on the beach, holding whatever they can carry, run from the gathering tsunami.

INT. DEPLOYMENT CENTER / SDF - MOMENTS LATER

The white metal room has one blue-"glass" wall overlooking the Atlantic; Kenjo and Mattias Rheiner stand beside Admiral Lisa Hayes who sits before a monitor attached by thick power cords to two giant black boxes labelled, 'Emergency Power Supply'. Lisa turns to Mattias Rheiner.

LISA
Thrusters? Why the hell did these...robots put thrusters on the moon? Are they trying to push it someplace? Is that even possible?

MATTIAS RHEINER
The SDF is estimated at a nearly two billion tons and it obviously flew here-- the moon is about eighty-two billion tons.

LISA
Why would they do this?

KENJO
If they pushed the moon out of orbit our ecosystem would completely collapse-- the world would be flooded.

Listen turns back to the screen and twists he commknob; Roy's face appears.

LISA
Captain, shut those thrusters down now, ASAP. Find the settlement and open it up until those things stop.

ROY
We're on it. Hunter, Claudia stay here, everyone else-

Lisa, twists off the commknob and sits back in her chair, rubbing her temples, thoroughly shaken by what she has heard.

LISA
Wouldn't it be simpler to just destroy the moon than to *move* it?

KENJO
It would.

Kenjo thinks for a moment, running his stubby fingers through his course white beard.

KENJO (CONT'D)
But, if they blew it up, they couldn't put it back afterwards and re-stabilize our ecosystem.

LISA
You think these robots want the Earth?

KENJO
Yes. And they want it vacant.

MATTIAS RHEINER
Or *whatever made them* wants it vacant.

INT. VERITECH COCKPIT (OSWALD) - SAME

Oswald guides his craft forward. Outside, fifteen of the engines flash and go dead; another thruster explodes; two more spark erratically.

OSWALD
Looks like they weren't quite ready to put this plan into action.

EXT. SURFACE OF THE MOON / EDIFICE CLUSTER - MOMENTS LATER

Three domes and four squat buildings are huddled amidst the framework of another seven incomplete structures. Ten INVIDS- six of them only partially-assembled- emerge from the hole in the center of one of the domes.

Glaring red magma-rounds rain down from directly above, riddling the crustaceous robots.

The six Veritechs speed down, full tilt; one-hundred-and-forty corkscrewing missiles stretch white smoke like spaghetti across the night and into the buildings.

The three domes explode and crumble; the squat edifices burst into myriad spinning plates as if they were windblown houses made of playing cards. The debris falls slowly in the low-gravity environment.

The pillars of blue flame erupting across the moon's surface flash and go dead; smoke hangs like squid ink in the vacuum.

EXT. OUTER SPACE / THE ORBIT OF THE MOON - MOMENTS LATER

Hunter and Claudia's Veritechs float in orbit, facing away from each other. A METAL CYLINDER with an antennae-covered cube in its center speeds up from the surface of the moon.

INT. VERITECH COCKPIT (HUNTER) - SAME

Hunter, monitoring his 360-screen, sees something flash into space. He dials the yellow zoom triangle: the image tightens. He sees the Metal Cylinder; an instant later it blurs from sight, propelled by blue lightning. His stomach sinks. He twists his commknob.

HUNTER
Claudia, did you see that thing?

Claudia's face flashes on his screen.

CLAUDIA
I saw a flash.

EXT. OUTER SPACE - LATER

The eight Veritechs speed back toward Earth; the wings of Claudia's damaged craft are gripped by hands extruding from the hulls of Dusty and Oswald's Veritechs.

EXT. THE OBELISK / SIEGE DEFENSE FORTRESS - SAME

Joan, Nicolai, Edward and the Mechanics observe the partially risen (and collapsed) black metal obelisk; the air immediately around the device wavers.

JOAN
Look at the air around it-- it's warping as if it were radiating extreme heat.

NICOLAI
It's not.

JOAN
It isn't. So why's it doing that?

The quintet look at the dark metal obelisk, the air around it blurred by means unknown.

INT. DEPLOYMENT CENTER / SDF - SAME

Lisa and Preston sit before the monitor, upon which shines Roy's face.

LISA
Was the craft Hunter saw headed sunward?

ROY
No Admiral. The opposite direction- Jupiter or Mars I think.

Lisa dials Roy off of the commknob. Preston rumbles his throat derisively; Lisa glances at him.

LISA
Reinforcements?

PRESTON
Yeah. And since we destroyed their remote control operation, it only makes sense that they'd send something stronger. Or they might come themselves.

LISA
I am going to recommend that we initiate the Orbital Net.

Preston nods, grim.

PRESTON
I suppose that we don't have a lot of other options.

INT. VERITECH COCKPIT (ROY) - MOMENTS LATER

Roy's 360-screen shines with a view of space and the adjacent Veritechs. He looks at Hunter's dented vehicle, frowns and twists the commknob.

ROY
Hunter, go on the private line.

Hunter's face appears on the screen.

ROY (CONT'D)
You know that you could've killed Claudia or someone else: someone who's supposed to be here.

HUNTER
I apologized to her.

ROY
Apologies are just words, they don't change what happened. That motorcyclist you ran off of the road when you were a kid wouldn't have-

HUNTER
I was asked to help on this mission, but I certainly don't have to listen to you, *Captain*. I'm not one of *your* men.

ROY
You certainly aren't.

Hunter's face disappears from the monitor.

INT. VERITECH COCKPIT (HUNTER) - TWILIGHT

The SDF sits on the horizon, its white steel golden in the crepuscular light. Hunter fights his exhaustion by occasionally beating his left fist into his thigh, THUD, THUD, THUD. His vizphone sounds, BEEEEEEP.

He pulls the phone from his jumpsuit pocket and looks at it: the still image is of May singing in a night club.

Hunter is about to put his vizphone away (BEEP, BEEP), but rethinks the idea.

HUNTER
666. Play message.

May's still image is replaced by a transmission of her huddled against the a wall, terrified. The sound of people YELLING and SHOUTING almost smothers her own voice.

MAY
Hunter. I'm in New York and...and things are crazy. The power is out and...and....somebody took my purse.

She starts to cry; her body shakes violently as if she has been immersed ice water. Hunter watches the image, pained.

MAY (CONT'D)
I'm going to Sonny's place in Chinatown. He was supposed to meet me here-

The message flashes to white; the word OFFLINE appear in red.

HUNTER
666. Open line. Call May Leung.

The cache image of May singing in a nightclub shines upon the screen.

MAY'S VOICE
You've reached singing superstar to be, May Leung. Leave a viz or voice after the beep.

BEEEEP.

HUNTER
I'm coming for you May. Stay at Sonny's.

INT. VERITECH COCKPIT (ROY) - SAME

Roy pilots his craft toward the SDF, surrounded by his squad. One of the Veritech's- Hunter's dented mecha- turns off from the group. Roy dials Hunter's face onto his 360-screen.

ROY
Hunter. What're you doing?

HUNTER
I'll be back soon. I've got to pick up May.

ROY
That Veritech is not yours to use-- fly to the launch lane.

HUNTER
What's one more mistake added to the list of screw-ups you've kept ever since I got booted from flight school?

ROY
You overestimate how much interest I've had if you think there's a list.

HUNTER
I'll return when I'm done.

Hunter's face disappears from Roy's screen.

Titlecard: Cape Canaveral, Florida

EXT. CAPE CANAVERAL LAUNCH PAD - TWILIGHT

In the open launch lot stand three tall blue rockets, each with three dorsal fins and two long wings: they are ORBITAL CARRIERS named HARBINGER, ACOLYTE and INTREPID. They are being attended to by hundreds of TECHNICIANS upon scaffolds and motorized ladders.

INT. VERITECH HANGAR - SAME

Oswald, Claudia, Roy, Dusty (barefoot and holding a moon rock wrapped in a towel), Cheveyo and the two other lunar expedition Pilots stand upon the gliding, WHIRRING hangar platform, a somber and somnolent group.

Oswald stares at a vizphone in his hand; upon the screen is a Superion Network News Program: the CG HOSTESS (a computer-generated model wearing a skin-tight bodysuit) "walks around" (read: is superimposed within) a flooded region of China.

CG HOSTESS
The death toll from the power grid assaults is estimated between three and four million, and twenty percent of the world is currently without power until-

Oswald CLICKS his vizphone off.

EXT. OUTER SPACE / EARTH'S SUNWARD SIDE - LATER

The Orbital Carrier HARBINGER, a tall blue rocket with three dorsal fins, soars through space, toward Jupiter; the Earth is thousands upon thousands of miles to its rear, a tiny marble.

The payload bay doors upon Harbinger's nosecone open up. Buoyed by flickering jets, twenty-seven satellites emerge from the rocket's interior, thrusting in different directions like flies shooed from picnic food; *affixed to each satellite are two nuclear warheads.*

EXT. OUTER SPACE / EARTH'S SHADOWED SIDE - MOMENTS LATER

The Orbital Carriers ACOLYTE and INTREPID sit in space, their cargo satellites adrift in the around them for hundred of thousands of miles-- a mine field of nuclear warheads.

EXT. OUTER SPACE / THE ORBIT OF JUPITER

The marbled amber-and-red planet Jupiter sits amidst it sixty-three moons; the metal sphere that sped from the Earth's moon now orbits this cyclopean world.

Four shadowy masses emerge from hiding within the gas planet; for a moment it looks as if the world is bleeding black ichor.

Blue lightning spits from the back-ends of the cloaked crafts; they speed forward, blurred into oblivion. From within the planet emerge the tips of nine other CRAFTS.

INT. VERITECH COCKPIT (HUNTER) - NIGHT

Hunter pilots his Veritech toward New York; upon the screen is the oblong of the city. A dark pit lit randomly by moving lights, like the cinders of a dying fire.

INT. SUMMIT ROOM / COMMAND TOWER - SEVEN PM

The ICAAT members have rested, but are all very anxious; many BICKER. Lisa, frowning, watches Lai Fushan admonish Mattias Rheiner.

LAI FUSHAN
(hotly)
Huài dàn.

LISA
Please calm down, this is getting contentious.

Fushan glares at the Admiral.

LAI FUSHAN
If 1.5 million Americans died, you'd be far less "calm". That wouldn't have anything to do with the nationality of the Veritech pilots, would it?

LISA
Don't *blame* us for training pilots to use these mecha-- it made simple geographic sense. The ship landed here. Comparing injuries is pointless: if that Orbital Net doesn't stop whatever's coming, we need another plan. That's what we should be discussing.

JOAN
I checked in with Sweden just before this meeting-- they've found no analogue for the combustible crystals in the fusion driver.

LISA
Is there some other way to power the SDF? How much power does it need?

JOAN
It would take about ninety nuclear reactors to power this craft, yet even then, the type of current is far too harsh for the wiring.

Lisa, frustrated, shakes her head.

LISA
We need this ship operational. We were given three to fight these invaders and not one of them works.

JOAN
I've an idea how we might glean some information, but I'll need to skip out right now.

LISA
Go.

Joan rises from the table and hastily departs.

EXT. OUTER SPACE

Four oblongs cloaked in black careen through space; the blue-lightning spitting from their posteriors disappears; they slow dramatically to a survey speed of 2800 miles per hour (approximately bullet speed).

On the distant horizon is Earth (half in shadow); interposed between the black oblongs and the Earth are two of the Orbital Carriers. Thousands of miles in each direction are tiny glaring flecks.

The distantly-spread warhead satellites are connected via superdense copper-coil lasers, slender threads of orange light that shine from one orbital to another, a glassine web of light, invisible from even thirty yards off.

The four cloaked oblongs adjust their trajectory and careen directly toward the Orbital Carriers; the stealth quartet fires green magma-rounds at the Orbital Carrier.

Before the viridescent barrage reaches the Harbinger and the Intrepid, two of the thousand mile long copper coil lasers are interrupted by balls of speeding green magma.

The satellite "mine field"- comprised of one undred and sixty two five-cone nuclear warheads- explodes, flashing across thousands of miles of space. *The net of blinding radiance obliterates the Orbital Carrier and envelopes approaching vessels*.

INT. SUMMIT ROOM / COMMAND TOWER - NINE PM

Lisa Hayes and the ICAAT committee members watch a live-def monitor, at the bottom of which shine the words, 'Orbital Binocular Telescope.' The assemblage stares at the brilliant white display overpowering the black fabric of space, mouths unconsciously agape, pupils small and agleam with light.

STONEWORTH
Could...could anything survive that?

MATTIAS RHEINER
We'll soon see.

The bursts fade; millions of pieces of small and unrecognizable debris drift in space-- the human and alien technology now homogenous scintillating flotsam. Relief floods the faces of the ICAAT committee members.

MATTIAS RHEINER (CONT'D)
Amazing. I regret calling this insane idea idiotic. We can let the public view the footage whenev-

LISA
Do you see that-- in the bottom corner?

The ICAAT representatives look in the corner of the screen; a dark oblong is silhouetted in front of the detritus. An instant later, blue lighting flickers from the rear of the mass; the shape disappears.

LISA (CONT'D)
Call your presidents and prime ministers: we're about to be attacked.

EXT. OUTER SPACE / THE ORBIT OF THE EARTH - MOMENTS LATER

A smoking, sparking, badly-damaged mile-long dark green vessel shaped like an overturned luxury liner with posterior fins transgresses the Earth's atmosphere. This is a BATTLE SPLINTER.

The green-metal hull bubbles with the heat of entry; EXPLOSIONS burst up and down the charred exterior. An instant later, a ROARING BOOM sounds and the rear of the craft is covered in flames.

A door opens in the front of the vessel; dark HUMANOID SHAPES spill into the firelit night.

EXT. SIEGE-DEFENSE FORTRESS - SAME

A huge magnetically-operated door beneath the launch lane opens; twenty water crafts speed out from within and SPLASH upon the moonlit Atlantic. These silver and green bullet-shaped vessels are propelled by a central engine around which orbits a secondary "rudder" turbine on a booming arm. These are DESTROID AQUATREADERS.

Twenty SONIC BOOMS displace the water behind the crafts; an instant later, they are gone.

INT. THE ROOM OF SPOKES - SAME

Joan and the beefy mechanic Edward lie in adjacent sleeping bags in the HUMMING room of spokes; two muted pitches RING at their presence. Edward rolls onto his side, the SHUFFLING of fabric unnaturally loud in the metal chamber.

JOAN
Quit fidgeting.

EDWARD
We should take sleeping pills. Be easier.

JOAN
Shut your eyes *and* mouth. Please.

INT. VERITECH COCKPIT (ROY) - MOMENTS LATER

Roy steers his Veritech above the cloud line.

LISA
Buenos Aires, Tokyo, New York, London, Oslo, Beijing have been hit. Metropolises this time-- they're going for people.

ROY
More Invids, Admiral?

LISA
No. Witnesses say it's something different. Bigger. Need you in Beijing.

ROY
Got it.

Roy pulls out a round tray from below the 360-screen, upon which shines an image of North America; his craft is a flashing triangle over the Pacific Ocean; he SLAMS his guidestick left.

INT. DESTROID AQUATREADER COCKPIT (DUSTY) - MOMENTS LATER

Dusty sits in the impact-jelly-lined cockpit of a Destroid Aquatreader; above the 360-screen is an angled pane of blue-glass; both true and compressed views are filled with moonlit water and black night. With his left hand, he steers using the metal “X” that tops a pole rising from the floor. The face of Commodore Preston Meyers face flashes on his screen.

PRESTON
Get to the Arctic Ocean.

DUSTY
I thought they were hitting cities.

PRESTON
They are, but the bulk of the wreckage fell in the Arctic. We need to recover what’s left-- it might be crucial in figuring things out-- a weakness or whatever.

EXT. ATLANTIC OCEAN - SAME

The rudder engine- suspended on a booming arm around the central thruster- orbits to the right side of he craft, causing the Destroid Aquatreader to veer left.

INT. VERITECH COCKPIT (HUNTER) - MOMENTS LATER

Hunter steers north toward the broad lateral street in that bisects the lower half of the city. Further north is a series of EXPLOSIONS that momentarily illuminate the city as if it were day.

Behind his blue glass, Hunter squints and presses forward, guiding his craft down toward Chinatown.

EXT. CANAL STREET - MOMENTS LATER

The only PEOPLE that remain in the street are desperately racing up the street toward their destination; cars are gridlocked and regularly abandoned. The “+” shaped pearl lights of the Veritech sweep up the street.

INT. VERITECH COCKPIT (HUNTER) - SAME

Hunter looks at his 360-screen: on his left is the canopy of an establishment called K-Bar. He CLICKS the brake and taps on the reverse thrusters, PLINK.

Sidewalk before the bar is crowded with PEOPLE.

HUNTER
666. Open line. Redial.

May’s still image flashes, summarily replaced by a live transmission.

MAY
I see you outside. I’m on the fourth floor.

Hunter looks in the side of 360-screen: in the window is May, waving at him (her vizphone image shakes from the gesture).

HUNTER
I can’t land below. Can you get to the roof?

In the window (and on the vizphone) May nods.

MAY
Yes.

HUNTER
Go up.

May disappears from the window; Hunter pulls back on his guidestick and taps his heel thrusters, PLINK. His craft ascends.

EXT. ROOF OF CHINATOWN APARTMENT BUILDING - SAME

The gray paint and tar covered rooftop is adorned with rusted vents, a water tank and a wire coop filled with dirty birds. The door leading up from the building is jostled from within, but does not open.

From beneath the western lip of the roof rises the Veritech on ROARING heel jets. The birds searched desperately for a way out, a tumult of filthy feathers and open beaks.

The door shakes in its frame again; the Veritech surmounts the roof and hangs in the air.

INT. VERITECH COCKPIT (HUNTER) - SAME

MAY
The goddam door won't open! The goddam door won't-

HUNTER
Calm down May and back away from it.

Hunter sticks his arm into the niche on his right side, CLACK.

EXT. ROOF OF CHINATOWN APARTMENT BUILDING - SAME

An arm with a metal hand- four fingers and two thumbs- unfolds from beneath the hull of the Veritech. Hunter guides his craft across the toward the door.

Lances of green magma rain down upon the city from up above, followed by a series of deep EXPLOSIONS. Two HOVERVANS, smoking, fall from the sky into the street immediately behind Hunter.

INT. VERITECH COCKPIT (HUNTER) - SAME

MAY
It's here, it's here!

HUNTER
May. Get in the basement.

The building across the street from Hunter EXPLODES.

MAY
But I-

HUNTER
Basement. I'll come back for you, I promise.

Upon her vizphone, May nods, tears rolling down her cheek. Hunter yanks his right arm out of the niche, pulls his guidestick around and presses the rear thrusters.

PLINK, PLINK, PLINK. The rooftop and the other similar gray squares nearby drop away; he soars upward into the confluence of dust and smoke.

EXT. THE VEIL OF SMOKE ABOVE DOWNTOWN NEW YORK - SAME

The Veritech transcends the smoke. Silhouetted against the moonlit sky is an enormous METALLIC ATTACKER, two long arms, two long legs and a small head stemming from its torso.

From the rifle in its extended left arm speeds another shaft of green magma, CH-CHF, directly at the Veritech; Hunter presses his craft back down beneath the smoke, FWASH.

EXT. CANAL STREET - SAME

The Veritech lands on extruding feet, CLANG.

INT. VERITECH COCKPIT (HUNTER) - SAME

Hunter pounds the buttons beside his head- SMACK, SMACK- and then puts his hand into the niche in the right wall.

EXT. CANAL STREET - SAME

The arms bearing the magma-cannon and the fusilladeer spring from beneath the Veritech's wings, CLANK, CLANK; the hand with four fingers and two thumbs springs from the hull, CLANK. The fingers briefly open and close into a fist.

The Metallic Attacker SLAMS to the pavement one hundred feet from Hunter, its black and green metal hull agleam with firelight. The invader is twenty-eight feet tall (six feet taller than the upright Veritech); its six-fingered hands and splayed feet are splattered with sooty clumps of gore. The Metallic Attacker's head is a dark green capsule with a black line across its "eyes" and six curved tusks jutting forward from its "mouth."

INT. VERITECH COCKPIT (HUNTER) - SAME

Hunter raises his foot over the lower gunpedal...and hesitates: the K-Bar and many other still-standing buildings are within his line of fire.

HUNTER
Dammit. God dammit.

The Metallic Attacker aims the launcher embedded in its right arm directly ahead, at the Veritech. It fires, BWWOOOF.

Hunter yanks his legs out of the foot-niches, CLACK, CLACK and STOMPS the retract bar.

EXT. CANAL STREET - SAME

The legs retract inside the Veritech; Hunter's craft *drops* to the ground, beneath the opponent's speeding missiles (two spheres covered with studs).

INT. VERITECH COCKPIT (HUNTER) - SAME

Hunter GRUNTS as the wind is knocked out of him; he taps the icon's thrusters, PLINK.

EXT. CANAL STREET - SAME

The falling Veritech CLANGS upon its extruding underside arms for a brief second and then launches forward, propelled by ROARING FLAME.

The Veritech speeds directly toward the Metallic Attacker. The three jets embedded in the foe's back ignite, FWOOSH.

INT. VERITECH COCKPIT (HUNTER) - SAME

Hunter pulls back and presses his guidestick all the way left.

EXT. CANAL STREET - SAME

As the Metallic Attacker takes flight, Hunter's Veritech spins upside-down; the arms jutting from the Veritech's hull face upward like the legs an overturned bug. With the Veritech's six-fingered hand, Hunter grabs the ankle of his ascending foe, CLANK.

Hunter's Veritech spins around, right-side-up SLAMMING the enormous opponent to the pavement, BDOOM. (A mile away, the studded spheres slam into a wall and EXPLODE, destroying nine city blocks.)

The Veritech releases the ankle of the attacker. The next instant, legs extend from the jetrocket's wings (HWRUNK, HWRUNK) and its engines flash off, FWUMP. *The five-ton Veritech falls feet first toward the Metallic Attacker.*

The flat undersides of the hemispherical feet SLAM into the recumbent foe's armor, one foot upon its left arm, the other upon its chest. Green and black metal SCREECH and BUCKLE beneath the Veritech's weight.

The Metallic Attacker *GROANS*.

INT. VERITECH COCKPIT (HUNTER) - SAME

Hunter is stunned by the sound the Metallic Attacker makes.

The prostrated opponent lifts its other arm. Upon the 360-screen, Hunter taps the opponent's elbow, PLINK, and STOMPS the lower gunpedal.

EXT. CANAL STREET - SAME

The polybarrel points toward the Metallic Attacker's right arm and spits red magma rounds into its elbow, CH-CH-CH-CH.

The Metallic Attacker YELLS, in a voice that sounds like three lions roaring simultaneously. The prostrated foe's forearm is wholly severed from its body; *red blood* spills from the thick arteries of the cloven appendage.

With incredible speed, the Metallic Attacker knees the rear of the Veritech, CLANK; the Veritech tilts forward.

INT. VERITECH COCKPIT (HUNTER) - SAME

Hunter falls forward in the cockpit but is held secure by the impact-jelly. He glances at the edge of the 360-screen: the one-armed Metallic Attacker stands up immediately behind him and picks up its rifle.

Hunter CLICKS the safety and taps the center thruster, PLINK.

EXT. CANAL STREET - SAME

Thruster fire BURSTS from the upthrust rear jet of the Veritech, scalding the Metallic Attacker's arm and head, pushing it backwards. The engine cuts out a fraction of a second later.

The metal behemoth topples onto its back into a burning factory, BDOOM. Stones and bricks and cheap dry walls CRUMBLE atop it; filthy smoke billows out, thick as tar. Only the metal boots of the Metallic Attacker can be seen through the smoke.

The Veritech regains its footing and pivots around; Hunter trains its weapons upon the foe.

INT. VERITECH COCKPIT (HUNTER) - SAME

Hunter, breathing hard, stares at the swirls of smoke and the inert boots that extrude from the collapsed building.

Without warning, a GIANT GRAY-SKINNED HUMANOID in a green uniform lunges from the smoke at Hunter; the hairless being has black eyes dotted by red pupils, bony plates covering its forehead and curved tusks jutting from its mouth.

The giant's enraged face fills the blue-glass cocpkit window.

GIANT GRAY HUMANOID
Zentraedi!

Hunter STOMPS the upper gunpedal.

EXT. VERITECH COCKPIT (HUNTER) - SAME

Carried by the momentum of the twenty-eight foot tall giant; the Veritech tips backward and SLAMS into the concrete. Hunter's magma-cannon fires into the belly of the Giant Gray Humanoid, CH-CH-CH-CH-CH...

EXT. CANAL STREET - SAME

Luminous red magma-rounds lance through the giant's torso, into the dark night sky. The gray-skinned behemoth ROARS and then collapses to its knees.

With a quick flash of thrust, FWASH, Hunter returns his craft to its feet, upright, weapons trained.

The Giant Humanoid COUGHS, SPLATTERING the Veritech's nosecone and cockpit with red blood. It WHEEZES and looks through the glass at Hunter...and then collapses to the ground, a portion of its spine and pelvic bone raw and steaming; blood drains from its severed right arm. With its left hand it reaches out for its discarded rifle.

INT. VERITECH COCKPIT (HUNTER) - SAME

Hunter SLAPS his rear thruster (PLINK) and SLAMS his craft upon his foe. The dying giant squeezes and holds down the trigger of its magma rifle.

Lances of green magma flash from the barrel into the buildings lining the streets nearby; *the fifth shot pierces the center of the K-Bar building.*

HUNTER
No, no, no!

Hunter shifts his feet within the leg niches as the barrel of the humanoid's rifle melts from the continuous magma shots.

EXT. CANAL STREET - SAME

The left leg of the Veritech SLAMS into the humanoid's gray skull, WHACK. Hunter raises and brings his mecha's foot down again, WHACK; the mantle cracks; the humanoid's head buckles like a thick egg shell, sprays gouts of gore and is then pressed flat with a CRUNCH, clots of brain and tissue covering the streets and sidewalks.

INT. VERITECH COCKPIT (HUNTER) - SAME

Hunter turns his craft to the collapsed ruin of the K-Bar.

EXT. CANAL STREET - SAME

Hunter's Veritech walks and halts before a singed canopy with the name K-Bar on it. The mecha's arms retract; its knees bend-- the hull nears the ground; the underside flap cradling the cockpit seat and the pilot unfolds.

Hunter races out of the Veritech, toward the wreckage.

HUNTER
May!

INT. BASEMENT / K-BAR CHINATOWN N.Y. - MOMENTS LATER

Hunter clambers down smoky stairs into the collapsed basement of the bar; soot and broken glass and the wet contents of burst garbage bags cover the caved-in area. He calls out into the darkness.

HUNTER
May! May!

Hunter ducks beneath a collapsed slab of concrete and looks into the dim blue light ahead. His eyes fill with tears.

Lit by the glow of her vizphone, a nine-hundred-pound wedge of concrete pressed through her chest, lies May Leung.

HUNTER (CONT'D)
No, no, no, no...

Hunter crawls forward, beside his closest friend in the world. She does not move. The picture illuminated on her vizphone is a still image of Hunter eating a cheeseburger, over which the word 'Offline' is superimposed.

He shakes his head in denial, stands upright and presses his palms to the wedge of stone pinning her down. All of his anger, and sadness, and regret, and fear, and failure, and loss he presses into the stone.

HUNTER (CONT'D)
Move goddam you, MOVE!!!

The stone does not move or even acknowledge his pained exertion. He drops his raw, red hands beside him and is seized by the first paroxysm of grief. He looks at May... seeing through her eyes their long, storied history.

HUNTER (CONT'D)
Oh May. May.

He drops to his knees and presses his tremulous fingers to her pale cheek and begins to SOB, shaking his head...denying horrible reality.

Hunter's vizphone RINGS: the image of Joan's face is luminous upon the screen.

INT. SUMMIT ROOM / COMMAND TOWER - SAME

Joan, bleary-eyed and her spiky hair dented, stands by the window, looking at the vizphone in her hands. Hunter's grief-stricken face appears briefly on her screen; he places his thumb over the lens of his vizphone; the image goes black.

JOAN
Hunter?

There is a moment of silence.

HUNTER (O.S.)
Yeah.

JOAN
I need you to get to the Arctic--
Dusty just confirmed that there's a sizable piece of wreckage there.
And grab a coat and some gloves.

Joan looks at the black screen for a moment; she hears a weak SOB escape Hunter...followed by a heavy silence.

JOAN (CONT'D)
Hunter...?

There is another moment of heavy silence; Joan opens her mouth to speak again-

HUNTER (O.S.)
I'm going.

The phone flashes; the word 'OFFLINE' appears on her screen.

EXT. ARCTIC OCEAN / BATTLE SPLINTER CRASH SITE - SAME

Upon a shelf in the Arctic Ocean, a two-hundred and seventy foot long section of the alien Battle Splinter lies sundered, spewing fetid green smoke into the air. Burning cargo and equipment lie amidst the wreckage, sinking through the ice.

An ARMORED WARRIOR, breathing steam, drags another GIANT (wearing a green cloth uniform over its gray skin) from the wreckage. The upright giant sees that its recumbent peer is badly injured: its left hand is missing, its face is scorched and a stalk of yellow bone protrudes from its right thigh. The stricken Giant looks into dark sky with the red pupils centered in its black eyes.

The Armored Warrior, its helmet gone and its armor dented, leans over and plunges its taloned, six-fingered gauntlet into the chest of its injured peer, SKVETCH. It adjusts its hand within its comrade; a dull POP sounds from within the infirm Giant's chest.

The standing giant lifts its crimson gauntlet from the steaming cavity rent into its peer and begins to walk away when it hears a MOAN from within the wreckage. The MOAN is followed by a BANG...and then another BANG.

The Armored Warrior walks toward the noises.

EXT. WITHIN THE ARCTIC OCEAN - SAME

Within the freezing waters is Dusty's submerged Destroid; he pulls a lever from the ceiling of the craft, causing a four-foot square block to lifts from the top of the bullet-shaped vehicle. Anti-aircraft cannons- each a foot in diameter- extend from the artillery.

The craft spins around and glides beneath a hole in the ice. The top left anti-aircraft cannon recoils and BLASTS a conical missile through the orifice above.

EXT. ARCTIC OCEAN / BATTLE SPLINTER CRASH SITE - SAME

The Armored Warrior watches the projectile BURST from the water and climb into the air.

The missile detonates, BDOOM. The Armored Warrior stares up at the explosion in the sky, its red pupils *enlarging* upon its black eyeballs as the radiance of the blast illuminates the environment.

INT. DESTROID AQUATREADER (DUSTY) - SAME

Dusty looks up through the cockpit window: the inky, blurred shadow of the Armored Warrior is cast upon the glowing, missile-illuminated ice above him.

EXT. ARCTIC OCEAN / BATTLE SPLINTER CRASH SITE - SAME

The light of the detonated missile fades, plunging the Armored Warrior and the crash site back into night. Dimly distinguishable beneath the ice are a series of red flashes.

The frozen ground below the giant erupts; SIZZLING red magma rounds riddle the giant, CLANGING into the metal of its armor, SMACKING into wet flesh and CRACKING apart tough bone. Like a doll mutilated by a rabid animal, the tattered giant falls to the icy ground, FWAK.

A hundred yards away, the BANGING from within the Battle Splinter continues.

INT. DESTROID AQUATREADER (DUSTY) - SAME

DUSTY
Not this Earth, buddy.

INT. VERITECH COCKPIT (HUNTER) - SAME

Hunter, speeding over glacial masses, looks at Joan’s face superimposed on the 360-screen. Her visage is replaced by a photograph of the black pillar that rose from the SDF during the Invid attack.

JOAN
When the Invids attacked our ship, this obelisk was activated in response, but then collapsed. Watch for something similar in their wreckage.

HUNTER
(distant)
What do you think it is?

JOAN
Might be a weapon or a security device or something else. Maybe the enemy's got one that works.

EXT. BATTLE SPLINTER CRASH SITE - MOMENTS LATER

Dusty closes the anti-aircraft lever (CLICK-CLICK-CLICK-CLICK) and dials up his anterior thruster on the icon above him, PLINK, PLINK, PLINK.

The craft surges forward, transcends the water and slides back onto the open ice. Dusty CLICKS the brake switch.

Stretched before Dusty (in the 360-screen) is the dead Armored Warrior; steam rises from the twenty-eight holes that riddle the body; red blood streams out and freezes upon the ice.

DUSTY
Killin' somethin' that bleeds is certainly a lot more satisfying.

INT. VERITECH COCKPIT (HUNTER) - MOMENTS LATER

Hunter speeds toward the wreckage; green lights flare momentarily. An instant later he descries Dusty's Destroid plunge into a hole in the ice, pursued by SIX ARMORED WARRIORS. Hunter reaches for the commknob.

INT. DESTROID AQUATREADER (DUSTY) - SAME

Hunter's face flashes on Dusty's monitor.

HUNTER
You've got six after you.

DUSTY
Stay topside and shoot any that come up-- I'll get as many as I can down here.

In under four seconds, Dusty: double-taps his finger on the 360-screen (PLINK, PLINK), STOMPS the left gunpedal, STOMPS the right gunpedal, pulls the anti-aircraft lever down (CLCLCLCL), presses its launch button four times (CLICKCLICKCLICKCLICK).

EXT. WITHIN THE ARCTIC OCEAN - SAME

Red magma-rounds lance into the foremost Armored Warrior's face and chest (WHANK, WHANK) and then sever the second giant's arm (WHANK). The third and forth giants point their weapons past their bleeding comrades, but are impaled by a speeding anti-aircraft missiles that pierce their bellies and erupt- THOOM- in a welter of bubbles and yellow entrails.

The two remaining missiles impale the face and stomach of the fifth Armored Warrior and burst into gory confetti.

The last remaining Armored Warrior rises before the Aquatreader, points its magma-rifle at the blue cockpit "glass," from behind which Dusty briefly looks out.

The giant fires upon the cockpit window repeatedly, water-muted reports, CH-CH-CH-CH; the "glass" withstands two bursts of green magma and then CRACKS beneath the third; water floods inside.

INT. DESTROID AQUATREADER (DUSTY) - SAME

Dusty, floating inside the submerged cockpit and bleeding profusely from the charred stump of his left arm, shoves his right arm the arm niche.

EXT. WITHIN THE ARCTIC OCEAN - SAME

The Destroid arm clamps around the Armored Warrior's throat and squeezes; the Armored Warrior- streaming gore from beneath its face plate- repeatedly fires magma into Dusty's cockpit. Clutching the last Armored Warrior's neck, Dusty's Aquatreader sinks. The Armored Warrior's head drifts from its shoulders as the depths claim all of the combatants.

EXT. ARCTIC OCEAN / BATTLE SPLINTER CRASH SITE - SAME

Hunter, inside his perched Veritech, has his weapons trained on the hole; flashes of color like dimly remembered Christmas lights twinkle within the water depths and his eyes.

Titlecard: Beijing, China (5:59 AM -- concurrently, different time zone)

INT. MODERN HIGH RISE / BEIJING - DAWN

Two AGED CHINESE WOMEN and an infant cower beneath an overturned sofa in the turquoise-colored apartment. They stare up at the picture of an avuncular Chinese man with a long gray beard, before which burn several incense candles. Reflected in the glass atop the man's beard is an ARMORED WARRIOR running towards the building. A red magma shot knocks of the tusk-adorned black-visored green helmet from the giant's gray head.

In the reflection atop the gray beard, the aged and young alike watch the giant gray humanoid look up into the air. Two magma rounds pound into the giant's forehead plate, CR-CRACK; the next round enters its head; the final two rounds push at the back of its skull and then break it open, SPLATTERING its brains upon the brick below. The infant stares blankly at the pretty lights.

INT. VERITECH COCKPIT (ROY) - SAME

Roy lands his craft beside the fallen giant; he twists the commknob. Commodore Meyers' face appears, a grave visage.

ROY
The situation in Beijing has been stabilized, Commodore. Where to next?

PRESTON
Taiwan. The units there are down.

EXT. MODERN ARCHITECTURAL SPRAWL, BEIJING - DAWN

The Veritech, perched on the giant's chest, leans back and then launches from its position, propelled by three ROARING thrusters. The legs retract within the hull.

INT. VERITECH COCKPIT (ROY) - SAME

ROY
How’s my crew?

PRESTON
Dusty was killed in the Arctic.

Roy’s eyes widen; his mouth opens just a crack...almost as if he intends to laugh at the absurd information that the Admiral has given him.

ROY
Are you sure...?

Preston looks sadly at Roy and nods his head. Roy dials off the commknob.

ROY (CONT'D)
He’s not dead. Not him.

Roy shakes his head and grits his teeth.

ROY (CONT'D)
Not him.

INT. DEPLOYMENT CENTER / SDF - DAWN

The white metal room is PEOPLED by a staff of eighteen OFFICERS. Admiral Lisa Hayes and Commodore Preston Meyers sit before monitors.

PRESTON
What next Admiral?

LISA
We need an Astronomer to mark where those ships came from and get a Binocular Telescope looking for more.

PRESTON
You think there’s more Zentraedi?

LISA
Zentraedi?

PRESTON
The pilots starting calling them that-- it’s what they yell when they attack us: their battle cry.
(MORE)

PRESTON (CONT'D)
You think there are more headed here?

Lisa nods her head in grim affirmation.

LISA
I believe what we've encountered was just their vanguard. They- and the Invids- were trying to claim this planet for a society, not just the crews of four ships.

EXT. ARCTIC OCEAN / BATTLE SPLINTER CRASH SITE - SAME

Hunter walks his Veritech toward the central block of the Battle Splinter wreckage (CLANK, CLANK). He reaches the largest opening; three blue pearls spring up along each wing of his craft; silver pluses illuminate within each pearl.

INT. VERITECH COCKPIT (HUNTER) - SAME

Hunter watches the crossed beams of his pearl lights stab through the rent and into the darkness, illuminating dark green walls upon which hang tapestries. The depictions are of fiery holocausts and massive floods destroying obtuse metropolises of stone or glass or steel: looming in the sky over all of these apocalyptic depictions are armadas comprised of dark green Battle Splinters and Fight Scythes.

Hunter twists his commknob to line 3; Joan's face appears.

HUNTER
I'm inside the Zentraedi wreckage.

JOAN
What do you see?

HUNTER
Green metal walls covered with tapestries of alien cataclysms.

Hunter sees one tapestry that displays *a luminous kidney-shaped ship* being attacked by multiple (significantly smaller) Battle Splinters and Fight Scythes.

HUNTER (CONT'D)
I just remembered something-- when I was knocked out on the moon salvo, I had another vision. An alien world with these long-legged dogs was destroyed by Zentraedi, but then another ship came along.

JOAN
What did the other ship look like?

HUNTER
Kidney-shaped, made of billions of metal particles or grains or something. Almost looked like television static. It drove off the invaders.

JOAN
(nodding)
I saw that too, though in a different setting. So did Edward.

HUNTER
Allies?

JOAN
Yeah. Maybe race that sent us the SDFs.

Hunter walks his ship further into the enclosure, CLANK, CLANK; the ceiling is lower, compressed by the damage of the crash: the passage becomes too small for the Veritech.

HUNTER
Can't take my ship further in.

JOAN
That's why I told you to get a jacket and gloves. Bundle up an keep on.

EXT. OUTER SPACE / THE ORBIT OF PLUTO - SAME

Two BATTLE SPLINTERS, propelled by blue lightning, speed past the cold distant world of Pluto. Four similarly large ships, conical crafts adorned with cannons and five scythe-like wings (points forward), follow shortly after. They are FIGHT SCYTHES.

INT. BATTLE SPLINTER WRECKAGE - SAME

Hunter, shivering beneath a large coat and with gloves on his hands, walks toward the crumpled end of the enclosure, his shadow cast before him by the pearl lights of the Veritech. His footfalls are almost silent as he strides across the thick metal of the spacecraft.

He approaches a door warped like a stick of chewing gum beneath the weight of the collapsed ceiling; dim light spills in from the other side. He wriggles in-between the portal and the frame.

INT. BATTLE SPLINTER WRECKAGE / WIRE NEXUS ROOM - SAME

Hunter emerges into a large area, the floor of which is slick with ice; dozens of taught metal wires fifteen inches thick crisscross the wide space from top to bottom like yarn in a game of cats-in-the-cradle.

Hunter looks up; his stomach sinks and his mouth opens: above him, encased in four of ovals, are FOUR ZENTRAEDI, their gray faces and white tusks pressed against blue glass that is smeared with brown blood. Elaborately curved, thirty-pronged knives are clasped in each of their left hands.

Hunter takes an involuntary step back while staring at the Zentraedi. They do not move...nor breathe. Hunter relaxes.

Upon the 'wall,' near the 'ceiling' (the ship is designed for zero gravity and has four floors) is an ellipsoidal opening within which light glows. Hunter walks over to a wire leading toward the lighted portal and hoists himself up. From within the adjacent room comes a low RUMBLING.

INT. SUMMIT ROOM / COMMAND TOWER - LATE MORNING

Lisa, standing, addresses the committee; they are stunned and distraught. (Joan is not present)

LISA
Since these warriors go after people, I propose that we divide the remaining Veritechs and Destroids for a World Patrol based solely on a *quantitative breakdown* of humanity.

LAI FUSHAN
That sounds fair.

INDIAN MAN
Very fair.

The rest of the council does not look as pleased as the Chinese and Indian representatives.

INT. BATTLE SPLINTER WRECKAGE / OBELISK CHAMBER - SAME

Hunter, exhaling cumulus clouds of steam from his exertion, hangs by his hands over the 'floor' of the illumined space. In the center of the room is an obelisk that rises from the floor to the ceiling; it is sixty feet tall, thirty feet wide and covered with metal glyphs; the air around it wavers as if with extreme heat; it spins in place like a top, RUMBLING.

Breathing out milky cataracts of steam, Hunter drops to the floor, FWUMP, and observes the turning obelisk; it switches direction alternately clockwise and counter-clockwise, faster and faster, RUMBLING louder as its speed increases.

Hunter backs away from the pillar and hoists himself up to the thick metal cable on which he entered the room. The pillar's oscillations continue, back-and-forth, and the warped air surrounding its surface begins to CRACKLE.

Within the opaque night of the twisting obelisk, tiny lines of gray light appear, though they remain stationary and do not spin with the erratically oscillating pillar. Within the gray light, a giant figure passes from right to left and disappears from view...as if walking offscreen.

Something SLAMS into Hunter and carries him from the cord, into the air-

INT. BATTLE SPLINTER WRECKAGE / WIRE NEXUS ROOM - SAME

Hunter falls into the open area of the wire nexus room, toward the 'floor' sixty feet below; his assailant, a six-legged SMARTDOG, a horse-sized canine with tusks, reptilian skin and four eyes, falls alongside him.

The floor rises up to meet Hunter; he reaches his hands out for a cable; the metal SMACKS against his fingertips- he cannot hold on- and his descent continues.

The Smartdog GROWLS and extends its foremost paws toward the next cable they fall toward; its long claws CLACK against the metal; its middle legs wrap around the wire.

Hunter, still plummeting, grabs the Smartdog's two hind legs; the appendages are wrenched in their joints with duals SNAPS; the canine BARKS wildly and slashes its left and right middle paws at Hunter, who is still hanging onto its hurt hind legs. A claw digs across Hunter's chest drawing blood and steam.

Hunter looks at the ground thirty feet below...and YANKS upon the canine's rear (broken) legs; the Smartdog HOWLS and releases its grip upon the metal wire.

Falling, Hunter clambers onto the wounded animal's back. They SLAM into the floor, the Smartdog's ribcage buckling beneath them with a series of POPS like firecrackers.

Hunter stands from the WHEEZING, GROWLING beast; steam rises from its mouth and the yellow ribs that protrude from its torso...a misty shroud. Hunter puts his hand to his bleeding chest, flicks away a fleck of frozen blood (CLICK-CLINK) and retreats from the chamber.

INT. SUMMIT ROOM / COMMAND TOWER SDF - SAME

Lisa Hayes and the ICAAT members look at a monitor displaying the SEVENTEEN SPACESHIPS assembled above the gas sphere of Jupiter, both Battle Splinters and Fight Scythes. The crafts slowly drift into a linear formation.

Two new Battle Scythes- propelled by blue lightning- join the armada. Upon the adjacent screen, SAMUELS, an African-American man with white hair and a narrow beard, shakes his head.

STONEWORTH
(to the President)
Shouldn't we release this information to the public Mr. Vice President?

SAMUELS
We should put everyone on high alert- let them prepare- but we shouldn't tell them exactly the...extent...of the threat yet. We need to proffer hope- even if it's tenuous- when we broadcast the apocalypse. We need to give them *something*. And I lost the prefix-- it's *President* Samuels now.
(Samuel's eyes bead up with tears)
We just had confirmation.

Stoneworth turns to Mattias Rheiner.

STONEWORTH
Why aren't the aliens cloaking their crafts anymore?

MATTIAS RHEINER
The Invids were robotic drones that only attacked to protect their plan, and that second wave was probably meant to test our mettle-- but we surprised them and knocked out most of their force before it even arrived. What we're looking at now is an *armada*, a force they probably consider so superior to ours that they no longer need to disguise it.

INT. VERITECH COCKPIT (HUNTER) - SAME

Hunter, shivering and pale, looks at Joan's contemplative face on his 360-screen.

JOAN
Seems like the obelisk is meant for long-range communication...possibly faster-than-light transmissions.

Hunter nods weakly.

JOAN (CONT'D)
Get back here. You need to eat and sleep or you'll croak.

Hunter nods weakly.

EXT. OUTER SPACE - SAME

Nine hundred mile-long columns of blue lightning streak across space.

INT. BATTLE SPLINTER / WIRE NEXUS ROOM - MOMENTS EARLIER

Within the zero-gravity green metal interior, illuminated by dim yellow lights, are twenty-six ZENTRAEDI in uniforms; seventeen walk upon the floor or ceiling with CLANGING magnetic boots, the remainder float within the area polishing weapons or traversing the vast enclosure using the steel wires that crisscross the room.

Six-legged Smartdogs traverse the room, their paws deftly padding across the wires. The canines pull weightless hampers filled with granite to each of the magma-canon bays. One of the Smartdogs GROWLS at a feral peer.

Within an adjacent room, an obelisk spins erratically back and forth. In the center of the spinning pillar are tiny lines of stationary gray light. A Zentraedi walks by the room...and then notices something within the obelisk: *superimposed amongst the gray lines is the image of Hunter on a wire and the Smartdog slamming into him, knocking him from view.*

EXT. ARCTIC OCEAN / BATTLE SPLINTER CRASH SITE - TWILIGHT

Six Destroids atop extended skis surround the site, huddled like guard dogs. Three blue tents with twice as many power generators have been settled alongside the perimeter of the wreckage.

Nine Swedish BIOLOGISTS in thick blue jackets study and dissect the first warrior Dusty killed; its armor has been removed. With a blue laser, a female Biologist burns into the red pupil centered in the giant's black eyeball, SSSSS.

Straddling the corpse's eleven-foot long torso, wearing galoshes and shin-deep in gory ice, stand two Biologists, alternately swinging sledgehammers into the sternum of the warrior's thick rib-cage as if they were members of a chain-gang, CRACK, CRACK, CRACK. Another Biologist attempts to remove the thick, armadillo-like plate covering the giant's elbow; two others work on a similar covering on its left knee.

Overseeing the inelegant autopsy is a tall, broad man of forty with a bright golden beard-- the Swedish geneticist named DR. ANDERSSON. He walks away from the autopsy toward a blue tent marked Gentech Biologi.

INT. GENTECH BIOLOGI TENT / BATTLE SPLINTER CRASH SITE - SAME

Dr. Andersson walks to a bank of live def screens and vizphones. Lisa Hayes, President Samuels, the German Chancellor, the Chinese Premier and other leaders included are all attentive and silent.

DR. ANDERSSON
(Swedish Accent)
The pyrosequencing results tested the same all three times: the alien's genome is almost exactly the same as the human genome. They are far more similar to us than we are to chimpanzees.

LISA
These things- these *giants*- are human?

DR. ANDERSSON
Yes, but their genetic sequence has been tailored to dramatically alter their physiology.

Lisa Hayes, President Samuels and the other visages are stunned by the revelation.

PRESIDENT SAMUELS
What do you mean by that? Grafts?

DR. ANDERSSON
No, true manipulation. The skin is modelled after something similar to an elephant, the shells on their forehead and joints are from something else- maybe a kind of turtle or armadillo- and their blood temperature and growth are also altered, but there is only one conclusion to draw: *sometime, someplace we shared ancestors with these beings*.

The tent door opens, admitting the tattoo of loud CRACKS that comes from the sledgehammers pounding into the ribs of the dead Zentraedi.

INT. MESS HALL / SDF - SAME

Hunter, wearing a new mechanic uniform and shivering, walks away from the automated dispensers with a tray bearing food encased in clear plastic containers. He scans the solemn area peopled by two dozen enervated SOLDIERS...and in an isolated corner sees Roy.

Hunter walks over to his brother's table and sits down, leaving three empty seats between himself and his sibling. The brothers look at each other for a moment and then look away...each oppressed by the weight of tremendous grief.

HUNTER
I'm sorry about Dusty.

Roy, distant, nods.

ROY
Were you able to save May?

Hunter presses his lips together and shakes his head.

HUNTER
I wasn't.

Roy looks at his brother and then back to his congealing bowl of split-pea soup; he swirls his spoon in the agglutinated ichor, breaking the skin on the surface.

ROY
You okay?

Hunter's jaw trembles as he fights his rising grief; he SNIFFS, rubs his eyes and CLEARS his throat.

HUNTER
I'll live.

ROY
That's an optimistic viewpoint
these days.

Hunter looks at his older brother, smiles weakly (a grin that does not quite reach his eyes), and then looks back down at the table.

HUNTER
Dusty faced six Zentraedi by
himself and killed every single one
of them before he went down.

Roy balls his fists, shuts his eyes and nods at the image.

HUNTER (CONT'D)
He died a hero.

ROY
I bet he did.

Roy nods again, stands and picks up his tray. He looks down at Hunter; the younger sibling, awash with grief, stares down, desultorily.

ROY (CONT'D)
Thanks for that.

Without looking up, Hunter nods. Roy departs.

INT. SUMMIT ROOM / COMMAND TOWER - SAME

Lisa Hayes and Mattias Rheiner stand before the weary assemblage.

On the wall behind them is a live-definition monitor showing an image of the Zentraedi armada in front of Jupiter; the massive oval ZENTRAEDI FORTRESS is in the rear of the phalanx.

MATTIAS RHEINER
The Zentraedi Fortress is of the same make as the SDF- though likely larger in scale- and the design is similar enough for us to believe that its power source might function as a replacement for our own inoperable fusion driver.

The committee is dumbfounded by the intimated plan.

LISA
If we are able to take the Zentraedi's fusion driver we might disable their most powerful weapon and enable our own in a single action.

LAI FUSHAN
If it has a fusion driver. And what is the likelihood that it would fit our SDF's niche?

MATTIAS RHEINER
If it didn't fit, we could put the combustible crystals into our own driver and install it. The crystals are the resource we are lacking, not the device, which is on its way back from Sweden.

INDIAN MAN
This is madness.

MATTIAS RHEINER
It is. All of it.

LISA
How many Veritechs will ICAAT give me for this mission?

STONEWORTH
The United States will contribute four.

Stoneworth and Lisa observe the board; nobody else responds.

INT. ENGINE AREA / SDF - MORNING

Admiral Lisa Hayes stares up at the fifteen-foot hemicylindrical niche in the wall, from which hundreds of thin threads run in all directions. Joan enters the area and walks toward her.

JOAN
Admiral.

Lisa, a cataclysm of questions silent behind her eyes, faces the diminutive English woman.

LISA
Yes Miss Esterly?

JOAN
I have an idea what the obelisk is.

LISA
Yes?

JOAN
It's some type of communications device, one that creates a subspace vacuum or sends subatomic information or creates a faster-than-light path for information to travel on.

LISA
To whom?

JOAN
My assumption is that it would contact the makers of the SDF.

LISA
These would be our allies...?

JOAN
That is my best guess. And I'll need all available men to work on the obelisk if you retrieve the fusion driver.

LISA
If we manage that miracle, you can have your men.

JOAN
And one other thing-- I think it would be beneficial to have Hunter Billingham as part of the team you're sending up there.

LISA
ICAAT only gave me four Veritechs and I'd prefer to put trained pilots in them.

JOAN
Hunter's seen things that would prove useful and he's done well against the Zentraedi- better than most trained men- maybe *because* he fights differently. He'd prove an asset, I'd wager.

LISA
I'll consider it.

Joan nods in appreciation and turns away from Lisa.

LISA (CONT'D)
Who do you think they are?

Joan turns back to face Lisa.

LISA (CONT'D)
These beings who sent us the SDF, the ones you hope to contact. Who are they?

JOAN
Enemies of the Zentraedi-- possibly another human race. Or perhaps... perhaps they're the original human race, the protoculture that both Zentraedi and Earthlings came from.
(she nods)
I hope we get a chance to find out.

INT. EXECUTIVE SAFE ROOM - EARLY EVENING

President Samuels looks at the live-def monitor showing the orbital binocular telescope transmission of Jupiter: the twenty-seven ships are gone, replaced by columns of jagged blue lightning.

PRESIDENT SAMUELS
Oh God.

EXT. TWO-STORY HOUSE - SAME

A two-story house with brick chimneys, stone cornices and wave-shaped topiaries sits within a large suburban plot. Behind the house, beside a kidney-shaped swimming pool, stands the dented Veritech, illuminated by deep yellow patio lights. Beside the sliding glass doors stand Hunter and his mother, Denise Billingham.

HUNTER
I'll be back, don't worry.

MRS. BILLINGHAM
I promise that I *will* worry. Both of my sons off to-

Her voice CRACKS; she shakes her head, determined not to cry.

HUNTER
I'm just trying to help out, do something good now that I can.

MRS. BILLINGHAM
You look after Roy-- he hasn't been the same since he broke it off with Diana. This family doesn't need another martyr.

HUNTER
I'll look after him. I love you.

Mrs. Billingham nods, her apprehension robbing her of words. Hunter hugs his mother dearly and then kisses her forehead.

INT. LIVING ROOM / THE WHITMAN HOUSEHOLD - SAME

An enormous live-def television trimmed in gold hangs on the wall opposite a gold-and-black striped couch; in the center of the room, Oswald faces his pregnant wife ALICE WHITMAN; she is distraught.

ALICE
This is why you went to Georgia Tech? To risk your life on some desperate mission for the Navy?

OSWALD
That education is exactly why I'm needed. And darling, the entire situation is desperate.
(MORE)

OSWALD (CONT'D)
So answer me before I go: will there be pork chops and mac and cheese the night I get back?

ALICE
What is this? Your...your last request or something?

OSWALD
No. I'm just looking to motivate all of my senses toward a safe return.

Despite herself, Alice grins. Filled with love, anger, fear, pride and despair, she looks at Oswald and nods...because she has no choice; Oswald kisses her lips and squeezes her shoulders dearly.

OSWALD (CONT'D)
Let me say goodbye to the girls.

ALICE
No. You'll say good*night* to the girls.

INT. CLAUDIA'S CABIN - SDF

The neatly-arranged room is covered with paintings of tropical beaches; Claudia, in a new uniform, leans over and empties a can of pink cat food into a clear glass dish. Two fluffy white cats (Persians) hop down from a bookshelf.

INT. OFFICER'S HALL / SDF - SAME

Claudia stands in the gray metal hallway outside her room. She tapes a postcard to the door, upon which is written, 'INSIDE ARE TWO LOVING & GORGEOUS CATS NAMED MAJESTY and TIARA: PLEASE FEED SHOULD CLAUDIA GRANT GO MISSING.'

INT. VERITECH HANGAR - SAME

Roy inspects the fusilladeer of his magnetically-buoyed Veritech.

EXT. ARCTIC OCEAN / BATTLE SPLINTER CRASH SITE - SAME

Four Veritechs, piloted by Roy, Hunter, Claudia and Oswald and settled on their legs, surround the wreckage of the battle splinter. Arms supporting six-fingered hands jut from the hulls beneath all four Veritechs, HWRUNK.

Hunter grabs a fin of the Zentraedi craft with his Veritech's six digits, CLANK; Roy's Veritech's hand curls around a bent outer edge and closes, CLUNK; Claudia reaches into the vessel and grabs a bar inside the craft, WHANG; Oswald walks his Veritech to the opposite side of the block and sticks his Veritech's hand into a large hole rent in the dark green steel, CLANK.

The four Veritechs tilt backward upon their legs, as if they were wolves baying beneath the moon. Low-level wing thrusters flash on all four crafts, FWHISH. The Veritechs rise; the two-hundred-and-seventy foot block of wreckage shifts; ice CRACKS.

The Veritechs' thrusters brighten; they shake, their arms taut, the four fingers and two thumbs on each appendage digging deeper into the dark green metal of the Battle Splinter. Freed ice CRACKS and POPS and falls off the massive fragment in shards and sheets as it rises. Water drains from two massive holes in the wreckage: codfish, ice floes and three Zentraedi corpses SPLASH into the ocean.

Titlecard: Airspace over Moscow, Russia

EXT. SKY OVER MOSCOW - DAWN

Thirty RUSSIAN PILOTS speed SUKHOI SU-30MK2 JETS into the sky and diverge, ROARING. Half of the planes are damaged.

Titlecard: Airspace over France, (5:49 AM -- concurrently, different time zone)

EXT. SKY OVER FRANCE - BEFORE DAWN

Sixty FRENCH PILOTS guide as many DASSAULT MIRAGE F-3 JETS in groups of three; high-pitched WHIRRS blare from the engines of the compact single-person crafts.

Titlecard: Taiwan, China (1:48 PM -- concurrently, different time zone)

EXT. EMERGENCY RESCUE CENTER - EARLY AFTERNOON

Abutting the destroyed region of Taiwan are hundreds of red medical tents with bleeding, wounded and grieved Taiwanese citizens going in or coming out.

Two blocks away are four ANTI-AIRCRAFT GUNS, Russian/Chinese made S-500 PMU-5s. The wide barrels of the missile launchers point into the sky *in all directions*.

EXT. OUTER SPACE / HALFWAY BETWEEN THE EARTH AND MOON - LATER

Roy (towing the weightless Battle Splinter), Oswald, Claudia and Hunter, cut their rear engines; the reverse-thrusters on the front of the Veritechs' wings flash, halting the crafts.

INT. CHAMBER / BATTLE SPLINTER - SAME

The four crafts ingress the moonlit chamber recently explored by Hunter; the tapestries depicting annihilation are now curled eerily in zero gravity, like still images of windblown curtains.

INT. VERITECH COCKPIT (CLAUDIA) - SAME

Claudia, a framed picture of her two cats nestled beneath her 360-screen, addresses the image of Roy's face.

CLAUDIA
Captain...I know that these are our orders, but do you think...do *you really think* that the ships will just pass by on their way to Earth?

ROY
I don't know, but it doesn't seem too likely that they would fire upon a drifting fragment of one of their own ships. We just need an opening to get at the Zentraedi Fortress, whether it flies near or we are passed by and can get at it from behind.

EXT. OUTER SPACE / THE ORBIT OF MARS - SAME

Seven-hundred-mile bolts of blue lightning streak past the orange-red sphere of Mars: the Zentraedi Phalanx speeds toward Earth.

INT. VERITECH COCKPIT (ROY) - SAME

Roy looks at Hunter's face.

ROY
Hunter go on the private line.

Roy's twists his commknob to a private channel; Hunter's face is superimposed over the tapestries.

ROY (CONT'D)
I've been meaning to say something to you.

Roy presses his palms together and rubs them back and forth- SH-SH-SH-SH- to generate heat and loosen his taut nerves.

ROY (CONT'D)
I'm sorry about how I cut into you. You saved the SDF and I should've acknowledged it. I'm not a forgiving man, but my intolerance...

Roy looks at the tapestries depicting the many violently-conquered worlds of the Zentraedi.

ROY (CONT'D)
It's cost me. I just wanted to say that you've really come a long way, and I can tell you're different now. Maybe you have been for a while, I just didn't see it- or didn't *want* to see it.
(he CLEARS his throat)
We might not survive this and I...I just didn't want things to end badly between us.

Roy, wholly unfamiliar with articulating his emotions in this manner, looks away from the screen and rubs his hands back-and-forth, SH-SH-SH-SH.

INT. VERITECH COCKPIT (HUNTER) - SAME

HUNTER
That means a lot to me: it's been a long time since you cared. I spent a lot of years resenting you, but when I was little, *I wanted to be you*. The night I took Dad's car I was trying to help out like you would've, but then I hit that motorcycle and...and-

ROY
What happened that night was an accident.

HUNTER
Maybe, but I certainly didn't forgive myself for it. I started abusing, got tossed from flight school and then there was this gap, this chasm ahead of me instead of a future. I couldn't fly, Mom was ashamed of me, you were in the war and Dad wouldn't even talk to me-- he faced his chair away at the dinner table so he wouldn't even have to *look* at me. The only time he even acknowledged my existence was once when I went into your room and he yelled at me, as if I might contaminate it or something.

ROY
That was wrong of him.

HUNTER
It was. And it didn't help us any.

ROY
No.
(very quietly)
We used to be close, right? When we were little.

HUNTER
We were.

Hunter look away from Roy's face for a moment, through the blue glass of his cockpit.

HUNTER (CONT'D)
It's unreal that we're here- now, in this situation- but in some ways, it feels like this is how it's supposed to be.

ROY
It does.

HUNTER
Do you think we should make our Veritechs hug? Shake hands at least?

For the first time in a long time, Roy LAUGHS.

EXT. OUTER SPACE / THE ORBIT OF THE MOON - MOMENTS LATER

Seven-hundred mile bolts of lightning speed past the moon.

EXT. OUTER SPACE / HALFWAY BETWEEN THE EARTH AND MOON - MOMENTS LATER

Blue lightning speeds past the floating fragment of the Battle Splinter within which Roy, Hunter, Claudia and Oswald hide. The area is brilliant with seven-hundred-mile long bolts; an instant later, the region is again dark.

The fragment of the Battle Splinter remains adrift between the Earth and the Moon, untouched.

EXT. OUTER SPACE / JUST BEYOND EARTH'S ORBIT - MOMENTS LATER

The twenty-seven blurred, lightning-propelled crafts that comprise the Zentraedi Phalanx become visible solid shapes; they are arrayed in the Earth's orbit over the Pacific Ocean. Seven-hundred miles of blue lightning chases itself into the vessels' glowing thrusters and disappears.

At an incredible (but far slower) speed, the Battle Splinters and Fight Scythes, propelled by dual thrusters, pierce the Earth's atmosphere. The metropolis-like Zentraedi Fortress, a larger, dark green and yellow version of the SDF (and oval-shaped cityship with two jutting rectangles in its front), remains behind...a cyclopean overseer eight miles long.

EXT. SKY OVER THE PACIFIC - 5 AM

Eight Battle Splinters and six Fight Scythes, propelled by SHRIEKING dual thrusters, speed to the south or to the east over the Pacific Ocean.

INT. SUPERION NETWORK CONTROL BOOTH - JUST BEFORE DAWN

Andrew, the slovenly CG artist who discovered the moon settlement, is dirtier than usual and very weary. He sits at his customized light-sensitive keyboard modelling the facial hair of a 'Host Template,' while eating WOW! Curry Chips. His boss, the urbane Bressman, is the only other person present; several of the computers are missing.

BRESSMAN
I can't believe they stole those. This thing will pass and then I'll press charges.

Andrew glances at a nearby monitor; his stomach sinks.

ANDREW
How well-made is this building?

BRESSMAN
Why do you ask?

Andrew points to a live-def monitor depicting the bay of Seattle. A dark shape looms in the glowing predawn sky.

EXT. SEATTLE BAY - MOMENTS LATER

A Battle Splinter speeds toward the perimeter of Seattle, its thruster SHRIEKING.

Sixteen Raptor Jets speed southwest to meet it, ROARING toward the starboard side of the invader. The planes fire twenty-four missiles at the Battle Splinter; the rockets HISS like a disturbed nest of snakes. Ninety-six oval flaps open on the starboard side of the alien vessel; from each of these flaps extends a polybarrel magma-cannon. The green muzzle-flashes spin in three circuits around all ninety-six, nine-barreled magma cannons, CHCHCHCH-CHCHCHCH.

A wall of green magma-rounds- 2,592 shots- meets the Raptor missiles a half mile off, prematurely detonating them in midair like a fireworks display, BDOOM. Most of the magma rounds continue past the exploded missiles, toward the Raptor Jets currently veering in sixteen directions. All of the jets BURST aflame and fall.

An oval hatch in the bottom of the craft opens, SHLUNCK. Steady CLANGING- in a rhythm akin to a man walking a horse- sounds from within.

From the orifice drops a dark-green metal vessel, a thirty-foot-long craft roughly the shape of a beetle. On its "face" are five lenses and three polybarrel cannons; from its right side protrude six massive 'exhaust' pipes. The vessel has six legs: a pair in the front, middle and back; each leg is sixteen-feet long and has two reversible knees; the feet are like steamroller cylinders. This is a CITYCRAWLER.

The insectile mecha SLAMS down upon the Seattle street and CRACKS the pavement; its legs absorb the impact.

Titlecard: Los Angeles, California

EXT. HIGHWAY / OUTER PERIMETER OF LOS ANGELES - SAME

The burning remains of four Raptor Jets smolder across all eight lanes of the highway. A Citycrawler speeds up the median, palm trees SNAPPING beneath the alternately walking and rolling mecha. Abandoned cars and trucks and fleeing, SCREAMING PEOPLE congest and confuse the streets on either side.

The six exhaust pipes in the right side of the Citycrawler extend, CLACK and then SPUTTER. The three-foot long tubes discharge coagulated clumps of dark red matter and then spray rose-colored gas into the air, FSSSSSS.

A LATIN COUPLE inside a six-door station wagon roll up their windows as the colored vapors waft toward them; a moment after their windows are shut, the rosy fog creeps in through the air-conditioning vents. A panicked MAN in a suit flees his sports car; thirty PEOPLE exit a public bus, YELLING; a MAN holding an infant and a gun WEEPS.

Behind the Citycrawler, a desert-hued LEOPARD TANK speeds onto the median, its churning treads splinter the palm trees (C-C-C-CRWUNCH), speeding the vehicle forward at nearly 70 mph. The four artillery barrels atop the TANK swivel toward the invader.

The top two barrels of the Leopard Tank fire- BDOOM- and recoil, followed directly by the bottom two barrels, BDOOM. The first two artillery rounds SLAM into the back of the Citycrawler and EXPLODE, denting the hull but not piercing it. The third and forth rounds fly wide, into a twenty-story building, erupting in a CRASHING swirl of glass and marble.

The Citycrawler circles around on its steamroller wheels and fires its three magma-cannons at the tank, an unrelenting barrage, CH-CH-CH-CH-CH-CH-CH-CH-CH...

Green magma-rounds pound into the Leopard Tank at first CLANGING, and then THUMPING (as the vehicle's metal heats and begins to melt) and then THWAKING into molten steel; an ASIAN SOLDIER- SHRIEKING and covered with dripping metal- runs outside and then collapses, almost instantly soldered to the street.

The Citycrawler pivots around, speed onward, continuously spraying rosy gas into the air, FSSSSS.

Titlecard: San Diego, California

EXT. AIRSPACE OVER SAN DIEGO - MOMENTS LATER

A Battle Splinter looms in the air a mile over San Diego; a veil has settled over the entirety of the metropolis, a sheer rosy quilt two hundred feet high.

EXT. SAN DIEGO / CITY PERIMETER - SAME

At the edge of the city, a stalking Citycrawler halts. The six exhaust barrels SPUTTER and are extinguished.

From the top of the craft emerges a thick metal sphere speckled with black holes. Blue lightning CRACKLES within the orifices.

EXT. AIRSPACE OVER SAN DIEGO - SAME

A flash of brilliant blue light consumes the entire city, a CRACKLING blanket of violent energy: *San Diego is being electrocuted*.

EXT. OUTER SPACE / JUST BEYOND EARTH'S ORBIT - SAME

The block of the Battle Splinter slowly accelerates toward the side of the Zentraedi Fortress. The distance between the two is now twenty miles.

INT. VERITECH COCKPIT (HUNTER) - SAME

Hunter, his craft poised before a rent, looks at the zoomed-in image of the side of the Zentraedi Fortress.

HUNTER
I'm beginning to think that trying to ingress through the launch lane is a very bad idea. It's what's they tried to do themselves-- the Invids on the SDF.

ROY
You have another suggestion?

HUNTER
We could try to get in through one of the thrusters.

Upon the 360-screen, Roy's brow wrinkles, perplexed; Claudia looks up from her viewboard.

HUNTER (CONT'D)
The thrusters are off and they're huge, and I'd bet that there are far fewer guns and cameras- if any- directly in line with them, *because* its such an unlikely place to enter the ship by.

EXT. OUTER SPACE / JUST BEYOND EARTH'S ORBIT - MOMENTS LATER

Nineteen miles from the Zentraedi Fortress, the Battle Splinter fragment shifts; its course alters slowly... subtly...in a broad arc. *The wreckage drifts directly in line with the six-thruster bay of the elephantine craft* (each thruster is nine-hundred feet in diameter).

Titlecard: Sydney, Australia (12:00 AM -- concurrently, different time zone)

EXT. AIRSPACE OVER SYDNEY - MIDNIGHT

Beneath the midnight sky, Australia's most populated city shines like a shard of the sun, a CRACKLING electrical purgatory, the sound of a billion firecrackers. Overhead, lit by the harsh glare below, looms a Battle Splinter.

EXT. CITY STREET / SYDNEY - SAME

Traffic lights burst; car engines explode; human skin dries, smolders and cracks; eyes shrivel like prunes in the sockets of screaming MEN and WOMEN...yet the only thing that can be heard is the deafening CRACKLE of the Genocide Shroud.

INT. ENGINE CORE / ZENTRAEDI FORTRESS - MOMENTS LATER

Oswald's Veritech opens a vent and thrusts into the cubical engine core, followed by Roy, Hunter and Claudia. A cluster of two-foot spheres with holes in them jut like a tree from the center of the 'floor'; this protrusion is the igniter. Rows of ten foot tubes sprout from the left and right walls; these are the crystal-mote "fuel" injectors.

The four Veritechs speed behind the igniter and- on extending metal legs- magnetically adhere to the 'ceiling' of the core.

INT. VERITECH COCKPIT (CLAUDIA) - SAME

Claudia looks at her viewboard SDF schematic and then at her 360-screen, assessing and comparing.

CLAUDIA
The starboard side-- just over the crystal injector.

ROY
The room behind it will be pressurized, right?

CLAUDIA
Yes.

INT. VERITECH COCKPIT (HUNTER) - SAME

ROY
Aim, turn off your lights, and fire on my mark.

Hunter, tense but steadfast, SMACKS the canon deploy buttons above either shoulder, taps the center of his 360-screen, PLINK, and then raises his boot over the lower gunpedal.

INT. ENGINE CORE / ZENTRAEDI FORTRESS - SAME

All four 'ceiling'-adhered Veritechs train their magma-cannons 'up,' toward the starboard wall above the crystal injector; they shut off their pearl-lights.

Darkness and silence swallow the human quarter.

The red flash of polybarrels illuminates the space in brilliant bursts; magma-rounds slam into, heat and dent the dark green metal wall.

The darkness returns during a moment's pause, the heated wall partially aglow. The four resume fire; red magma-rounds impacting into the dented wall, again and again and again. A round breaks through: the wall is pierced. An instant later, a huge metal plate tears loose and speeds down the engine core, spaceward.

Yellow light and the physical contents of the adjoining chamber pour through the breach-- steaming air, three gray crates, a rifle, two elaborately curved knives and three flailing Zentraedi wearing black uniforms are sucked into the vacuum of the engine core.

The Veritechs speed into the opening, Oswald, Claudia, Hunter and Roy. Behind them, the first two Zentraedi are sucked through the ellipsoidal vent, spaceward; one speeds too close to the edge and is decapitated; the other clears, but begins to freeze. The third Zentraedi wraps his gray, six-fingered hands around the tree-like cluster of an igniter. He groans (silent in the vacuum) his lungs expanding, his ribs cracking...until his torso bursts, his depressurized lungs and stomach swollen like balloons.

INT. STORAGE CHAMBER / ZENTRAEDI FORTRESS - SAME

The Veritechs speed inside the (now empty) fifty-foot tall hundred foot-wide green enclosure, illumined by hexagonal yellow lights. The four rocketjets twist right-side up, aligning themselves with the chamber's orientation.

Claudia aims her polybarrel at the magnetic plate immediately before the door; she fires one round; the oval depresses; the magnetic door slides into the wall, to reveal the five Zentraedi Warriors in uniform waiting on the other side, guns raised, tusks bared, red pupils constricted on the black orbs of their eyes.

They are sucked into the room; three are immediately yanked through the breach, their chests expanding violently.

INT. VERITECH COCKPIT (CLAUDIA) - SAME

Claudia pulls back on her guidestick; in the perimeter of her 360-screen, a dying Zentraedi reappears in the breach and fires a shot that lances into her craft...and through her neck.

Blood is sucked from her neck into the vampiric vacuum. Upon her screen, the superimposed faces of Roy, Hunter and Oswald stare in shock.

INT. STORAGE CHAMBER / ZENTRAEDI FORTRESS - SAME

Claudia's Veritech is sucked through the breach, into the void beyond. Within their crafts, silenced behind blue glass, the other pilots call out to her in anger and grief.

EXT. THE OBELISK / SIEGE DEFENSE FORTRESS - SAME

Joan, Edward and a dozen tired MECHANICS work on the scaffold surrounding the obelisk.

The crew solders the glyphs that were damaged in the previous collapse, restoring the damaged metal icons.

INT. THRUSTER BAY PASSAGE / ZENTRAEDI FORTRESS - SAME

The Veritechs fly to the middle of the long hall. They point their magma-cannon down and release a hail of red magma-rounds. The shots slam into the floor, denting, melting, pushing the metal down. A second burst punches through, depressurizing the chamber below.

Two Zentraedi in uniform are sucked into the almost wholly depressurized hallway; their eyes swell up and burst; their blind bodies flail and bloat horribly as they are pulled along the passage, toward the breach, followed by cargo boxes, knives and a metal dish spilling amber liquid and clumps of orange, spongy protein (food).

INT. ENGINE AREA / ZENTRAEDI FORTRESS - SAME

The Veritechs soar into the room; the space, lit by pentagonal yellow lights in the green walls, is the size of two warehouses; like the engine room of the SDF, the floor is covered with rows of white domes.

Sucked toward the breach is one remaining uniformed Zentraedi; he fires a magma-rifle at the Veritechs. The rocketjets diverge, but a lance of green magma spears the magma-cannon arm of Oswald's craft. The Zentraedi and Oswald's magma cannon are sucked through the breach.

INT. VERITECH COCKPIT (HUNTER) - SAME

Hunter looks at his 360-screen: directly ahead of him is a wall upon which myriad little black threads trail; the cynosure of these lines are two silver, cylindrical FUSION DRIVERS. The blue glass centers of these power sources are lit by the iridescent, combustible crystals within.

INT. ENGINE AREA / ZENTRAEDI FORTRESS - SAME

Oswald and Hunter speed beside the first fusion driver, arms extruding from their Veritechs; they adhere their magnetic feet to the wall. Roy spins his craft around, guns out, looking for enemies, reverse thrust keeping him in place against the vacuum that still draws debris.

Oswald clamps his craft's hand upon the box below the fusion driver; Hunter clamps his craft's hand upon the box atop it;

Roy extends his craft's hand and then curls its fingers around the vertical bar at the top of the cylinder.

INT. VERITECH COCKPIT (OSWALD) - SAME

Oswald shifts his arm within the niche; upon the metal box, the six-fingered metal hand tightens.

ROY
Do it.

INT. ENGINE AREA / ZENTRAEDI FORTRESS -

Oswald clenches his Veritech's hand and twists; the safety box is crushed; he yanks it from the wall and gives it to the vacuum; Hunter summarily crushes and then extricates the top safety; he gives it to the vacuum.

Roy pulls on the vertical handle; the fusion driver slides forward, revealing the fifteen metal prongs in the wall. The moment the connection is broken, the pentagonal yellow lights on the left side of the room go dark.

The Captain curls his Veritech's arm and clutches the fusion driver against his hull as if it were a baby.

Hunter and Oswald jet to the adjacent driver. Oswald grabs the vertical handle; Hunter clamps, crushes and tears the top safety from the wall and then the bottom.

Oswald pulls the second fusion driver from its niche. The connection breaks: every light in the room (and Fortress) goes dark.

Two seconds later, the space is illuminated red by magma-rounds: Hunter fires a barrage into the empty, hemicylindrical niches, pounding and tearing apart the rods and delicate wiring that once distributed the fusion drivers' power. Behind him, Oswald and Roy- each clutching a fusion driver- speed toward the breach.

INT. THRUSTER BAY PASSAGE / ZENTRAEDI FORTRESS - SAME

The Veritechs soar up the dark passage and veer right, to the warped door. From the darkness, lances of green magma speed at their exposed starboard sides: the first shot dents Hunter's undercarriage; the second and third shots fly wide; the fourth shot pounds into the bottom of the fusion driver Oswald carries, *piercing it*.

INT. STORAGE CHAMBER / ZENTRAEDI FORTRESS - SAME

The three Veritechs speed into the room, toward the breached hull, Hunter's pearl-lights illuminating the way. *Iridescent crystals are sucked from the buckling bottom chamber of the fusion driver that Oswald holds.*

INT. ENGINE CORE / ZENTRAEDI FORTRESS - SAME

The three Veritechs speed into the engine core. Oswald, Hunter and Roy point their fusilladeers behind them and fire one-hundred-and-twenty side-winding missiles back inside, the corkscrewing smoke, a tangle of telephone cords that converge within the breach.

By the time the first missile explodes, the trio has fled the enclosure.

EXT. OUTER THRUSTER / ZENTRAEDI FORTRESS - MOMENTS LATER

The three Veritechs speed past the floating fragment of the Battle Splinter, into outer space; once clear, their central thrusters flash brilliantly and speed them toward Earth.

Behind them, the nine-hundred-foot-wide thruster-skirt buckles slightly; bloated corpses, detritus, weapons and body parts are expelled and hang in sunlit zero-gravity like phlegm from a giant's nostril.

EXT. OUTER SPACE / JUST BEYOND EARTH'S ORBIT - SAME

The Veritechs speed toward Earth. Behind them, the magnetically-powered launch-lane door of the Zentraedi fortress opens up.

INT. DEPLOYMENT CENTER / SDF - 3 PM

Roy's face flickers onto Lisa Hayes' monitor.

ROY
Admiral. We got one.

LISA
(incredulous)
You got one...?

Preston looks over from his monitor. Lisa cannot believe what she has just heard.

ROY
One and a half actually, but the bottom compartment of the second one drained out. It's the right size.

Lisa nods as if in a dream.

LISA
The Zentraedi Fortress?

ROY
Neutralized.

LISA
Get. Here. Now.

Lisa switches to her broad audio channel; Preston switches to his broad audio channel.

EXT. THERMOSPHERE (UPPER ATMOSPHERE) - MOMENTS LATER

The Veritechs enter the thermosphere. The fusion drivers glow, but are otherwise unaffected.

INT. VERITECH COCKPIT (OSWALD) - MOMENTS LATER

Oswald taps the side of his 360-screen, PLINK; the rear view expands to cover the entire screen. He taps the zoom triangle seven times, PLINK, PLINK, PLINK, PLINK, PLINK, PLINK, PLINK. The view is of space. He taps the left side of a silver thread beside the zoom triangles, PLINK; the stars pan right; the screen is filled with an image of the partially-collapsed Zentraedi Fortress.

Oswald taps the zoom triangle twice, PLINK, PLINK. The launch lane of the Zentraedi Fortress fills the 360-screen.

OSWALD
Their launch lane's open.

The entire screen fills with the shaky image of an enormous cannon barrel, much, much closer.

OSWALD (CONT'D)
Something's following us.

ROY
Hell's hell. How far off?

OSWALD
Still outside the atmosphere:
hundred-ten, hundred twenty miles--
far outside our range.

Oswald taps the reverse-zoom triangle, PLINK; the image widens; the 360-screen is filled with an image of the pursuer. The dark green ship is shaped like a wedge; a wing juts from either side; five rudders sit upon its tail. On the right side of the ship is an enormous cannon half as large as the craft itself (the opposite wing is heavily weighed to balance it out). This is a BALLISTA JET.

OSWALD (CONT'D)
They have a long range weapon. And
its faster than us.

ROY
Roll.

EXT. THERMOSPHERE (UPPER ATMOSPHERE) - SAME

The Veritechs twist and split in three directions.

INT. VERITECH COCKPIT (HUNTER) - SAME

HUNTER
Get the fusion drivers down there,
I'll draw its fire.

Sadness empties the Captain, but he nods at the proffered plan.

ROY
Come back. Please.

HUNTER
I'll do my best.

Hunter pulls back on his guidestick and loops around, facing spaceward...and the unseen Ballista Jet. He taps his left-wing thruster, PLINK, and SLAMS his guidestick right.

EXT. THERMOSPHERE (UPPER ATMOSPHERE) - SAME

Hunter steers his ROARING craft up, twisting figure-eights and then banking in sharp rectilinear patterns...but always ascending, closing the distance between himself and the long-range foe.

A glint of light speeds down from up above, very far wide of Hunter's erratically veering Veritech...toward another target.

The shot lances directly into Roy's central thruster.

INT. VERITECH COCKPIT (ROY) - SAME

A jet-propelled metal "harpoon" speeds through Roy's chest, the 360-screen and then the nose of the craft.

EXT. THERMOSPHERE (UPPER ATMOSPHERE) - SAME

The harpoon bursts through the front of the Veritech, trailing blue motes and green smoke.

INT. VERITECH COCKPIT (HUNTER) - SAME

Roy's translucent face disappears from Hunter's 360-screen.

Hunter looks outside and sees the his brother's Veritech: dark green smoke sprays from the rear of the spinning craft.

Hunter's stomach sinks; he SLAMS his control to the right and arcs his craft toward his brother.

INT. VERITECH COCKPIT (ROY) - SAME

Tangible pixels coruscating with every color in existence and blood from the eleven-inch hole in Roy's chest shower the cockpit.

The dying Captain shoves his right hand into the arm-niche, CLACK.

INT. VERITECH COCKPIT (HUNTER) - SAME

Hunter speeds beside his brother's smoking craft: the arm beneath Roy's Veritech unfolds and its fingers extend, releasing the fusion driver into the thermosphere.

Roy looks at his brother through the blood and pixel-smeared blue glass of his cockpit *and waves him back*. Hunter continues to speed toward him. Roy shakes his head and mouths the word, "go," waving him back yet again. The back of the Veritech flashes and BURSTS open; the craft spins, trailing a vortex of green and black smoke.

HUNTER
No. Please. *Please*.

Three hundred feet away, Roy's entire craft EXPLODES. Hunter pulls back on the guidestick peeling away from the spinning shrapnel. The fusion driver spins in the air end-over-end.

Hunter grinds his teeth and pounds his fist against the impact-jelly, SMACK, SMACK, SMACK, SMACK, SMACK.

OSWALD
What exploded?

HUNTER
(quietly)
That was him. He's gone.

Oswald is shocked. Hunter punches his right wing thrust, PLINK, and then SLAMS his guidestick hard left. The craft soars toward the spinning fusion-driver.

HUNTER (CONT'D)
I'll get the stupid thing.

EXT. THERMOSPHERE (UPPER ATMOSPHERE) - SAME

Hunter speeds his Veritech toward the spinning cylinder; it is now two miles above him (the fusion driver drops slower than the thruster-propelled ships). The arm extends from the bottom of Hunter's craft, HWRUNK.

INT. VERITECH COCKPIT (HUNTER) - SAME

Hunter watches the spinning cylinder on his 360-screen: the currents of uneven air buffet it left and right.

OSWALD
Hunter, that ship's still up there.

The hollowed twenty-eight year-old- erratically veering his craft left and right and tweaking thrust- speeds toward the cylinder.

HUNTER
Need to grab it now-- it'll be harder once we hit mesophere.

The plummeting fusion driver turns slowly, end-over-end.

EXT. THERMOSPHERE (UPPER ATMOSPHERE) - SAME

Hunter's Veritech draws within three hundred feet of the fusion driver, arm extended. He veers abruptly port and then thrusts at the slowly-turning cylinder, digits outstretched.

A pocket of air knocks both the craft and the falling fusion driver. The top of the oblong CLANGS against the Veritech's hand...and then spins off in the opposite direction.

INT. VERITECH COCKPIT (HUNTER) - SAME

Hunter dials up his wing thrusters, PLINK, PLINK; his Veritech surges toward the caroming and falling oblong. He then shoves his boots into the Veritech's leg niches, CLACK, CLACK.

EXT. THERMOSPHERE (UPPER ATMOSPHERE) - SAME

Hunter's Veritech, its legs unfolding, speeds past the falling oblong, yanks back on his guidestick and pivots around: his upraised feet are directly in line with the spinning cylinder.

The fusion driver CLANGS into the Veritech's right foot...and adheres magnetically. In an instant, Hunter curls his mechanical fingers around its vertical grip bar.

INT. VERITECH COCKPIT (HUNTER) - SAME

HUNTER
I've got it.

EXT. THERMOSPHERE (UPPER ATMOSPHERE) - SAME

A flash of light from overhead spears the falling- but horizontally stationary- Veritech: it pierces the top of the thruster housing and emerges from the bottom.

A second flash almost immediately follows; the left wing is lanced.

Holding the fusion driver, trailing luminous blue motes and green smoke from its central and left thrusters, Hunter's Veritech plummets.

INT. VERITECH COCKPIT (HUNTER) - SAME

OSWALD
What just-

HUNTER
My central and left engine are blown.

OSWALD
What color's the smoke?

HUNTER
Green.

OSWALD
Shut off your engines, now! The CC core's been pierced.

Hunter CLICKS *and holds down* the brake switch on his guidestick; he SLAPS the palm of his hand against the icon in the ceiling. PLUNK-PLUNK-PLUNK.

EXT. THERMOSPHERE (UPPER ATMOSPHERE) - SAME

The lone remaining thruster on Hunter's falling craft FLASHES off, extinguished. Green smoke and blue motes of light trail into the sky above him for seventeen miles.

The smoke emerging from the two holes changes from green to gray.

INT. VERITECH COCKPIT (HUNTER) - SAME

HUNTER
The smoke's gray now.

OSWALD
Good. That's just thread and panel. Try to pivot your wings to slow your fall down to 120, I'll get you when I'm done.

EXT. THERMOSPHERE (UPPER ATMOSPHERE) - SAME

The Ballista Jet speeds down; racing up toward its side-along a sharp diagonal vector- is Oswald's Veritech.

INT. VERITECH COCKPIT (OSWALD) - SAME

Oswald taps the area immediately ahead of the Ballista Jet on his 360-screen, PLINK. He then triple-taps the area immediately behind it, PLINK, PLINK, PLINK.

He STOMPS the upper gunpedal four times.

OSWALD
From Roy.

EXT. THERMOSPHERE (UPPER ATMOSPHERE) - SAME

The fusilladeer fires ten missiles at the Ballista Jet; the green craft decelerates...directly into the thirty missiles speeding behind it.

The Ballista Jet EXPLODES.

EXT. MESOPHERE (MIDDLE ATMOSPHERE) - SAME

Hunter's Veritech, spitting gray smoke and clutching the fusion driver to its hull, plummets backwards into the blank bright strata of middle atmosphere and is buffeted by the change in pressure, FW-FW-FWOOOMMP-P-P-P.

Oswald speeds his Veritech toward Hunter's falling ship. Legs spring from the bottom of Oswald's craft, HWRUNK, and the rear thruster flashes, FWASH: the flying craft- feet forward- surges toward its falling sibling.

The upraised hemispherical feet CLANG upon the wings of Hunter's craft and magnetically adhere. The Veritechs plummet; Oswald's Veritech standing upon Hunter's wings.

INT. VERITECH COCKPIT (HUNTER) - SAME

HUNTER
Will this hold?

OSWALD
At this velocity your wings will snap off. We need to stabilize and scoop.

EXT. STRATOSPHERE (LOWER MIDDLE ATMOSPHERE) - SAME

The stacked ships transgress into the pale blue stratosphere; the Veritechs start to spin in circles.

With each upward revolution, Oswald flashes his wing thrusters, FWASH, FWASH, FWASH, slowing the perilous descent.

INT. VERITECH COCKPIT (HUNTER) - SAME

The dizzying view proffered by the 360-screen swirls in front of Hunter; the twenty-eight year-old perspires and becomes pallid yet remains alert.

INT. VERITECH COCKPIT (OSWALD) - SAME

Oswald pulls back on his guidestick and then CLICKS the brake switch. His craft- and Hunter's- face directly into the clouds ahead, falling, falling, falling.

OSWALD
We're about to hit weather.

EXT. TROPOSPHERE (LOWER ATMOSPHERE) - SAME

The stacked Veritechs transgress the troposphere (the strata within which weather exists) nose-first.

INT. VERITECH COCKPIT (OSWALD) - SAME

OSWALD
Seven miles. Angle your wings on my mark.

Oswald makes a fist to steady his tremulous hand and then poises the tips his index, middle and ring fingers beneath the three thruster icons.

INT. VERITECH COCKPIT (HUNTER) - SAME

Hunter wipes the sweat from his left palm onto his Mechanic pants and grips his guidestick. Outside the clouds and an unfortunate bird (CLUNKSPLAT) rush up to meet him.

The veil clears: below the plummeting Veritechs lies the smoldering peninsula that was once Florida.

EXT. TROPOSPHERE (LOWER ATMOSPHERE) - SAME

The Veritechs speed from the clouds at a forty-five degree angle, FWASHH.

INT. VERITECH COCKPIT (HUNTER) - SAME

Hunter, plummeting, stares at the reflection of himself and Oswald rising up from the ocean depths below.

EXT. ATLANTIC OCEAN ABUTTING FLORIDA - SAME

Oswald's thruster BLASTS; within his soundproof cockpit, he yells the word, "mark." The wings of each craft shift thirty-two degrees.

The ROARING, crafts curve away from the ocean, dragging a rooster tail of spume-rimmed water for three miles.

Oswald and Hunter's stacked Veritechs, stabilized, speed north, toward the SDF.

INT. THE OVAL OFFICE - SAME

The President wipes his face with a handkerchief and looks at the seven-lens camera operated by his Female Aide. His voice is solid and confident; his gaze is unwavering.

PRESIDENT SAMUELS
Words of comfort will ring hollow for many of you on this dark day- that is entirely understandable- but the ability to elevate the spirit of another through words, that...that is a *human ability*.

INT. DEPLOYMENT CENTER / SDF - SAME

Lisa stares at her monitor, upon which shine the faces of Hunter and Oswald.

INT. VERITECH COCKPIT (OSWALD) - SAME

Oswald looks ahead: red and green magma flashes across his blue cockpit glass like fireflies at play. The Corporal guides his craft toward the SDF's launch lane (currently closed), carrying Hunter.

PRESIDENT SAMUELS (V.O.)
So I will use words: it's all I have. In this desperate hour, I will not abandon what makes us great, the cornerstone of human culture, all of our dreams, all of our failures and achievements and that is simply *the ability to try.*

INT. LAUNCH LANE / SDF - MOMENTS LATER

The magnetic door of the launch lane slides open, FWANG. Stacked one atop the other and carrying the fusion drivers, the Veritechs enter the enclosed runway.

Magnets center the crafts; Oswald detaches from the ship below him, CLUNK; Hunter pivots the wings of his Veritech, steering while inertia propels him onward.

INT. VERITECH COCKPIT (HUNTER) - SAME

Hunter looks at the edges of his 360-screen: three U-shaped STRIKE SHIPS plummet from the sky, toward the ingress.

The first Zentraedi vessel is shot from below by missiles from an unseen Destroid; it EXPLODES. The second Zentraedi vessel is shot from the right side by the red magma-rounds of an unseen Veritech; it EXPLODES.

The third Strike Ship speeds inside the launch lane; the magnetic door is SLAMMED down upon it, CRUNCH. The craft POUNDS into the floor of the launch lane, wedged in the half-closed door.

Hunter taps the nose of the caught craft on his 360-screen, PLINK, and then STOMPS his upper gunpedal.

INT. LAUNCH LANE / SDF - MOMENTS LATER

Hunter- facing the opposite way- fires his magma cannon (CH-CH-CH) into the nose of the craft, HAMMERING against it again and again, THUD, THUD, THUD.

Two Zentraedi leap from the ruined cockpit into the launch lane; an instant later the Strike Ship is pushed back outside; the door shuts behind it, CLANG.

Hunter extends the fusion drive toward Oswald, as if it were a baton;

the Corporal releases his own damaged unit (which floats magnetically) and then grabs the handle of the intact one. Within the soundproof cockpit Hunter yells, “go.” Oswald jets to safety.

Hunter SLAMS his Veritech’s feet upon the floor of the lane and turns to face the trespassers. He fires red magma rounds up the hall, CHCHCHCHCH, a spray that covers the bottom thirty feet of the passage.

A headless giant falls to the floor, revealing his poised shipmate, training a lance rifle weapon directly at Hunter. The Zentraedi fires twice, CH-CH. The Veritech’s magma-cannon flashes- POOMF- and dangles, dripping motes of blue light, useless.

INT. VERITECH HANGAR - SAME

Upon the magnetic platform, strapped to an industrial flatbed cart, is the intact fusion driver. Oswald and TWELVE MECHANICS (including the Russian Nicolai) have their hands upon the precious cylindrical oblong.

PRESIDENT SAMUELS (V.O.)
The world is being attacked by a hostile civilization from the stars, but still I want to *try* to make a difference, *try* to speak to people for as long as I live. Even if logic says otherwise, I will try to encourage hope, sympathy and pride.

Tears pours down Oswald’s face, but he does not make a sound.

INT. THE COMMAND BRIDGE / SDF - SAME

Lisa Hayes and twelve Officers run into the command bridge of the SDF, a windowless three-tiered dome of dark gray steel. In the center of the room is an oval-shaped dais shaped, upon which sit six impact-jelly-lined seats.

INT. ENGINE AREA / SDF - MOMENTS LATER

Oswald and the Mechanics stand upon ladders adjoining the hemicylindrical groove. Using the pneumatic flatbed for support and wearing protective gloves, they align the fifteen holes in the rear of the fusion driver with the fifteen rods jutting from the niche.

The moment the metal rods and inputs connect, the pentagonal lavender lights adorning the walls of the room overpower the ersatz human fixtures.

INT. LAUNCH LANE / SDF - SAME

Lavender lights illuminate the two-mile-long enclosed runway. Hunter's Veritech, on CLANGING feet, runs from a branching passage directly at the Zentraedi; the giant fires at the blue glass cockpit, CHCHCH; Hunter veers slightly; the shot glances across his right wing, PWANG.

The Zentraedi's next shot- CHCHCH- CRACKS the blue glass. An instant later, the giant is impaled by the nosecone of the running plane, HCWRUNCH. Blood sprays like a crimson roar past the yellow tusks of the Zentraedi's open mouth.

The giant swings his rifle stock toward the fractured blue glass; Hunter jumps out of the opened cockpit; the glass SHATTERS.

Hunter falls onto the launch lane floor where his left wrist SNAPS. Blue glass showers down upon him. Pressing past his agony, he snatches up a large shard with his left hand and runs directly behind the impaled Zentraedi.

The gray giant stumbles back: the nosecone withdraws from his chest with a syrupy PUCKER. The giant collapses onto his taloned six-fingered hands and shell-plated knees, a dozen CLACKS followed by a booming THUD.

Hunter, raising the glass shard in his right hand *and injured left hand*, races beneath the exposed neck of the enormous warrior. The red pupils of the Zentraedi's black eyes flicker to the small man that runs beneath his chin.

Pointed shard still upraised, Hunter races from beneath the giant's gray neck, into which he just scored a pink line; a heartbeat later, a waterfall of crimson pours down from the Zentraedi's lacerated throat.

The giant collapses to the floor, BDOOM, eyeing his little killer with widening red pupils. Hunter drops the "glass" shard, CLANK, and points to the tattoo of the demoniac skull on his neck.

HUNTER
That's what this means.

INT. THE COMMAND BRIDGE / SDF - SAME

The pentagonal lavender lights in the ceiling illuminate Lisa Hayes and her Officers. The dormant room THRUMS with energy, active for the first time in many years. In the delineated sections of the second and third tiers, ellipsoids and ovals recede into the walls, CLAKT, and then slide back, ZZZZZ, revealing similarly-shaped screens.

Fifty nozzles emerge from the floor, evenly spaced along the circumference; a ripple of concern eddies through Lisa and her Officers. The nozzles spray coruscating, multicolored particles onto the round metal wall of the bottom tier-- a sheet of scintillating motes.

Far a moment, the bottom tier is a painfully brilliant array of changing colors (Lisa squints), but soon the light transforms into a panoramic view of the world immediately surrounding the Siege Defense Fortress.

Two dark specks- distant Fight Scythes- sit on the opposite horizon. The room vibrates; Lisa and the Officers grab railings to remain upright.

INT. SUMMIT ROOM / COMMAND TOWER - SAME

The members of the ICAAT board look through their picture window: their building is sinking into the deck of the ship.

EXT. SIEGE-DEFENSE FORTRESS - SAME

The peopled buildings and domes across the craft recede into the four-mile wide oval base of the Siege Defense Fortress, WHIRRING smoothly...retracting out of harm’s way.

White metal cannons rise or spring from the standing edifices; the walls of the perimeter towers drop down like sleeves to reveal hundreds of artillery holes; polybarrels jut from tall white spires.

INT. HALF-SUBMERGED HALLWAY / SDF - SAME

Hunter, maneuvering around his injured hand, climbs up the ladder of the waterlogged hallway, toward the light above.

INT. THE COMMAND BRIDGE / SDF - SAME

As the Officers scramble for the ramps to the command bridge's second and third tiers, a nearby sound gets the Admiral's attention: nine white metal palettes two feet across and two inches thick *levitate* from the floor of the dais (they are magnetically buoyed). Upon the central dais is an icon shaped like an oval with two jutting rectangles: three lavender triangles line the back of the image; six lavender crescents glow within its center.

Lisa's eyes brighten upon seeing the familiar control.

LISA
Get ready for lift-off.

INT. ENGINE CORE OF HULL THRUSTER #3 / SDF - SAME

The engine core is a three-hundred-foot wide cube with a crescent shaped flap on the south wall. Iridescent *pink* particles spray from tubes on the west wall; iridescent *green* particles spray from tubes on the east wall. In the center of the room, the tree-like cluster of spheres ignites, FWATCH, flashing blue. The room fills with white light.

EXT. ATLANTIC OCEAN / BENEATH THE SDF - SAME

The spike-studded SDF hull hangs more than a mile deep in the Atlantic. Six crescent-shaped lights flicker on within deep cavities, POOOMF. Lodged seaweed, air and flotsam are expelled.

EXT. SIEGE-DEFENSE FORTRESS - SAME

The craft rises from the ocean, airborne for the first time in fifteen years, a ROARING, resurrected battle fortress. Stuck to the spike-covered hull are hundreds of feet of seaweed, dangling from below like a dripping beard, a rusty bicycle, a shoe, two canoes and a motorboat.

Veiled in the steaming vapors of the Atlantic, the Siege Defense Fortress- buildings retracted, weapons extended, hull-thrusters ignited- is airborne and ready for combat.

EXT. THE OBELISK / SIEGE DEFENSE FORTRESS - SAME

Hunter, holding his hurt hand, walks over to Joan: she is monitoring Edward and the fifty other Mechanics who work on the scaffold surrounding the obelisk. Joan looks at Hunter.

JOAN
That was a miracle, what you did.

The Englishwoman squeezes his shoulder; Hunter, destroyed, nods. Joan looks away from him, back to the obelisk.

JOAN (CONT'D)
(to Edward)
There’s one other just above you!

Edward looks at a scratched glyph in the shape of a painter’s palette with additional curves; he solders the area where the metal is scratched, FZZZZT. Joan turns back to face Hunter.

JOAN (CONT'D)
The glyphs are an external circuitry: when the lines are reconnected the obelisk should function, send a message to the Protoculture or whatever it does.

Hunter looks at the obelisk and the mechanics that surround it like flies on a hanging trap.

HUNTER
If it becomes operational, they’ll need to clear off. Fast.

JOAN
They know.

The SDF continues to rise into the air.

INT. THE COMMAND BRIDGE / SDF - SAME

The ocean drops away from the rising craft, visible to Lisa on the panorama wall of the Command Bridge. Two Fight Scythes hang in the west; three Battle Splinters speed in from the East. Commodore Preston climbs up the ramp onto the dais beside the Admiral.

PRESTON
They’re remaining well out of range of our cannons and fusilladeers.

Lisa surveys the middle and top tier of the command bridge: most of the compartments are illuminated by ellipsoidal 360-screens...yet six monitors on the top tier remain dark.

LISA
(to the top tier Officers)
Go to the dark monitors.

The ordered Officers scramble toward the six compartments with dark screens. Lisa watches one of them- an ASIAN OFFICER (male, twenty-four)- STOMP the gunpedal and tap the screen; a lavender light flashes upon a floating palette immediately beside the Admiral.

Other Officers activate the other dark stations, STOMPING and tapping; each action illuminates a lavender light until six shine on the palette.

Lisa Hayes' presses her five right fingers to the control; Preston puts his thumb on the sixth, PLINK, PLINK, PLINK, PLINK, PLINK, PLINK.

EXT. SIEGE-DEFENSE FORTRESS - SAME

A rectangular block a half mile long, five hundred feet wide and deep, rises from the left rectangular extension that protrudes from the front of the SDF, VSSHHHZZZ. The front of the block is a convex lens of blue glass threaded with thousands of silver wires. The weapon CLANGS into place, atop a swivel mount. The wire illuminates, a gridwork of iridescent light. This is a LENSCANNON.

INT. THE COMMAND BRIDGE / SDF - SAME

LISA
Officer Hui, target and fire.

The Asian Officer taps the nearest enemy ship, PLINK, and STOMPS his gunpedal. The lavender lights within the SDF momentarily go dim.

EXT. SIEGE-DEFENSE FORTRESS - SAME

THUNDERCLAPS and myriad RINGING NOTES accompany the blinding iridescent light that glares from the lenscannon and strikes the nearest Fight Scythe, nearly five miles away.

The lenscannon shuts off; the THUNDERCLAPS and RINGING NOTES echo across the coast. For an instant the struck craft hangs in the air, seemingly unaffected.

INT. ZENTRAEDI BRIDGE - SAME

Nine Zentraedi stand in the dark green conical bridge of the struck Fight Scythe. A monitor displaying the risen SDF hangs on the wall immediately before the command dais.

The dark green metal of the entire bridge turns deep red, then bright red, then bright orange and then white. The air within the enclosure wavers from the extreme heat; the Zentraedi within shrivel and collapse into a pile of their own ashes, which- seconds later- bursts aflame.

INT. THE COMMAND BRIDGE / SDF - SAME

Lisa and her Officers watch the dark green ship glow bright white, a shape cut from the sun; layers of steel peel away from its hull like the petals of a wilting flower.

The ship drops from the air: *the ground beneath the falling vessel bursts aflame before the craft even touches it*.

Another Officer STOMPS a lenscannon gunpedal; the lights in the command bridge momentarily dim.

INT. ENGINE AREA / SDF - SAME

The lights within the engine area grow dim. Nicolai, staring at the center of the fusion driver, GASPS and shakes his head.

NICOLAI
Nyet, nyet, nyet!

EXT. THE OBELISK / SIEGE DEFENSE FORTRESS - SAME

The obelisk begins to twist and RUMBLE; Mechanics flee the scaffold; the air around the glyph-adorned pillar warps.

Hunter looks at the horizon: a Zentraedi ship is seared by a RINGING iridescent blast from the lenscannon. He returns his gaze to the obelisk: the pillar twists in wildly erratic back and forth oscillations, RUMBLING; the air around it starts to CRACKLE. Gray lines illuminate within the dark pillar, stationary, separate from the spinning mass.

INT. THE COMMAND BRIDGE / SDF - SAME

Lisa watches another Battle Splinter pierced by the lenscannon. The ascending invader becomes a radiant white comet, trailing sheets of molten metal.

LISA
Again. Every one. And then we hunt down the rest.

The Russian Mechanic Nicolai, red-faced and huffing runs into the room.

NICOLAI
Admiral. Wait! Do not fire!

Lisa looks down at the gasping, perspiring Russian.

LISA
Hold fire.

NICOLAI
The...crystals...in fusion driver...every shot...every shot...uses them...seven, maybe eight more shots...will use them all up.

Comprehension and then apprehension flood the Admiral's face. Preston and the Officers await her command.

PRESTON
Admiral?

LISA
Use magma cannons and missiles for now-- hold off using the big gun.

Lisa Hayes surveys the pixel-wall: nine Zentraedi ships have surrounded the SDF; on the distant horizon hang a few more flecks that will shortly resolve into other foes.

PRESTON
I hope Esterly's obelisk works.

EXT. THE OBELISK / SIEGE DEFENSE FORTRESS - SAME

Joan, Hunter, Edward and the Mechanics stare at the spinning obelisk; with a loud BOOM it implodes...and disappears from sight, BWWWZZZT.

The crew stares in disbelief at the creased, warped air that only moments ago contained the one-hundred-and-ten foot tall spinning pillar of black metal.

JOAN
No, no. Please. We-

A second BOOM precludes her plea: *from the warped crease created by the obelisk's implosion, myriad gray grains SPRAY into the air.* The gray-particle stream shoots directly up, a nine-mile-high geyser, FWWWWASSSHHHHHHH.

The Mechanics flee inside the SDF, putting distance between themselves and the ROARING torrent of gray motes; Joan and Hunter stay where they are, looking up.

Billions of particles reach the zenith of the geyser, remain airborne, fan out and *begin to form a bulwark in the shape of a kidney.* The geyser continuously feeds the structure and renders a MOTE SHIP, comprised wholly of swirling gray grains. The ship- twelve miles wide- sits motionless in the air, protectively over the SDF.

The Zentraedi ships surrounding the SDF pivot away to retreat.

HUNTER
They’re scared of it.

JOAN
So am I.

Water flows up from the ocean, directly into the kidney-shaped craft, CRACKLING as it impacts the gray grains of its surface; winds HOWL and converge upon the Mote Ship, carrying sand and stones. The gray particles begin to glow with many-colored light, brighter and brighter, CRACKLING and SIZZLING.

HUNTER
What’s it doing?

JOAN
Building itself. Fueling itself.
Maybe both.

Two Zentraedi ships disappear, propelled by blue lightning, FZWK; an instant later, they are followed by four more, FZWK.

INT. THE COMMAND BRIDGE / SDF - SAME

Lisa and Preston hug each other joyfully; on the panorama, the remaining Zentraedi ships lance into space propelled by blue lightning, excepting one with a smoking engine.

EXT. THE OBELISK / SIEGE DEFENSE FORTRESS - SAME

The Mote Ship, its surface a percolating haze of light, sends a sheet of luminous motes at the remaining Zentraedi vessel. The sheet strips the green ship of its color, water, life and energy; the final Zentraedi craft is transmogrified into a black coal that instantly plummets to the earth where it BURSTS into a welter of ash and soot. The static sheet returns to the kidney-shaped Mote Ship, where it is absorbed.

The Mote Ship brightens; a loud BOOM sounds from the within it; the blue sky darkens to gray. The Mote Ship brightens; a second thunderous BOOM sounds; the gray sky blackens as if night has fallen.

INT. THE COMMAND BRIDGE / SDF - SAME

Lisa, Preston, Mattias Rheiner, Oswald and the Officers look at the panorama wall, now dark with premature night.

EXT. THE OBELISK / SIEGE DEFENSE FORTRESS - SAME

Hunter, Joan and Edward stare up into the black sky: a sheet of static slides from the Mote Ship into the water; a moment later, a wall of water ten miles wide rises from the ocean. The water BURSTS into a wall of white steam which is summarily petrified. Upon this ‘screen’ of petrified steam, is a ‘hologram’ of planet Earth as seen from space. Fifteen green rectangles speed away from the earth.

The image changes to a view of the Milky Way galaxy. The enemy fleet- now depicted as a lone green rectangle- moves away from the blue circle representing Earth.

The image changes to a view of myriad variegated iridescent lights, shaped in jellyfish, starfish, flower, egg and more amorphous forms. Joan’s mouth hangs agape at the sight.

JOAN
That...must be our universe.

Upon the image, a blue circle appears in the bottom right corner.

HUNTER
That's us?

Joan nods. A green rectangle appears next to the blue dot.

JOAN
And that green rectangle is them.

A moment later, in the far left corner of the projected image, *one-hundred and ninety-seven green rectangles appear*.

Joan and Hunter stare at the image, horrified.

INT. THE COMMAND BRIDGE / SDF - SAME

Lisa, Preston, Mattias Rheiner, Oswald and the Officers stare soberly at the Mote Ship's 'holographic' projection.

LISA
Do you think that all of those are Zentraedi fleets?

MATTIAS RHEINER
Yes...or possibly Zentraedi *worlds*.

EXT. THE OBELISK / SIEGE DEFENSE FORTRESS - SAME

The petrified steam dissipates. The unnatural night abruptly ends and the black sky brightens to golden twilight. Without hesitation, the Mote Ship speeds into the sky and out into space, a SONIC BOOM resounding in its wake.

Hunter is a statue; Joan, buzzing with questions, sits down.

JOAN
I haven't been off my feet in more than a day: it feels good to sit.

She looks at Hunter, concerned. Hunter, a hollowed shell, stares out at the twilit ocean.

JOAN (CONT'D)
Hunter. Come here and sit down.

Hunter walks over to Joan and sits beside her, his eyes are cold gems.

HUNTER
We can't possibly defeat...that. We did so much, we lost so much- my brother and May- and for what?

JOAN
We have some time. Time to make decisions and get things done, and that's all that life really is anyway-- time. That's what *you* gave us.

Joan's lips tremble, but she keeps her emotions in check.

JOAN (CONT'D)
Thank you.

Hunter nods. Joan puts her hands around Hunter shoulders and hugs him tightly; he is too spent and drained to weep.

A shadow passes over the deck of the SDF, followed by another. Hunter and Joan look north: landing in the water, gently buoyed by hull thrusters, are two more Siege Defense Fortresses.

Hunter stares at the two pristine cityships and nods, his despair momentarily leavened.

HUNTER
I think we've just been drafted.

Titlecard: Three months later...

INT. LIVING ROOM / THE WHITMAN HOUSEHOLD - SAME

Oswald, his wife Alice (no longer pregnant), and their two young daughters (MAUDE and LANA), sit nestled together upon the black and gold couch, facing the enormous gold-rimmed television. On the television is the computer-generated image of a white, fur-covered hippopotamus driving a 1940s car on a serpentine road delineated by spikes; eight-year-old Maude holds a fluffy steering wheel in her small hands.

OSWALD
What's this furry hippo want to do?

MAUDE
Get to blue panda's house-- she's got snakes in her toilet.

A baby CRIES from the other room. Alice sits forward; Oswald places his hand on her shoulder.

OSWALD
I'll change her-- this game's a bit over my head.

Maude and Lana GIGGLE. Oswald walks to the far door and before he leaves, sneaks a glance back at his family...and smiles.

EXT. PINESGROVE CEMETARY - MORNING

Hunter, wearing a Naval Airborne uniform and holding a bouquet, and his mother, wearing black, stand before a monument in the center of the graveyard, upon which is written, 'In Memorium of a Lost Hero: Roy Fredrick Billingsworth, Because of You, We Endure.' Thousands of flowers climb up the sides of the stone, like a multicolored tide.

HUNTER
Let's put some on dad's too.

Hunter's mother nods.

Titlecard: Three Days Later, Pacific Ocean, the Coast of China near Shanghai

EXT. SIEGE-DEFENSE FORTRESS-2 - NOON

The second Siege Defense Fortress sits within the waters of the Pacific, near Shanghai, its buildings and domes extended from its deck. Beneath the bright noontime sun, the enigmatic city of white steel shines.

CHINESE CIVILIANS with luggage and silent faces are being carried to the SDF-2 on four ferries in groups of thirty.

INT. VERITECH HANGAR - SAME

Hunter and Oswald, both in uniform, escort a group of twelve PILOTS (Chinese and Australian males and females) to the platform overlooking the compartmentalized bay within which eighty new Veritechs sit. Oswald turns to face the Pilots.

OSWALD
Today is your first hands-on orientation with the Veritechs. We only have two months before we leave Earth, so please ask questions if you don't understand something, we've no time to waste and each machine is far too precious to risk damaging.
(MORE)

OSWALD (CONT'D)
I’m Oswald Whitman, Commodore of the SDF-2, and this is Flight Captain Hunter Billingham.

CHINESE WOMAN
Sir...we know who you two are. Everyone in whole the world does.

The other Pilots nod in awestruck affirmation of her statement.

Oswald looks at Hunter; the two veterans exchange a succinct prideful glance beneath which lies the deep grief their shared experience will always carry. Hunter steps in front of the Commodore and CLEARS his throat.

HUNTER
Pilots, get on the platform.

The Pilots load onto the platform; Hunter joins them; Oswald departs.

HUNTER (CONT'D)
Hold on to the rail.

The Pilots grab the safety rail circumscribing the platform.

HUNTER (CONT'D)
We don’t know what we’ll face out there in the big black, but we do know who our enemies are.

Hunter looks at the Pilots; they nod in affirmation.

HUNTER (CONT'D)
I’ll teach you how to kill Zentraedi.

Hunter steps on the pedal, CLACK.

Cut to black.

The End.